Ontario

Making Accessibility Happen:

A Handbook for Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (the directorate) would like to thank the municipalities and AACs that provided their invaluable input on this project.

This information resource is available in other accessible formats (CD- ROM, large print, Braille, audio, and digital text) and in French, upon request, by contacting the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

The directorate would like to hear your comments on this Handbook: what you like about it and how you think it could be improved.

The directorate also invites you to send in your tips and success stories so that members of Ontario's AAC's can continue to share and learn from one another.

Please send your comments to:

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Published by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Printed by the Queen's Printer for Ontario
Province of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
© 2004, Queen's Printer for Ontar[illegible]
ISBN 0-7794-6682-9

Introduction

More than 1.5 million people in Ontario have a disability and face barriers to accessibility on a regular basis.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) is designed to improve the accessibility of communities throughout Ontario by removing existing barriers over time and by preventing new barriers from being created.

Municipal governments play an important role in the planning and development of their communities – in their streets, parks, public transit, libraries, social housing, emergency services, public buildings, programs and other services.

This role, which includes enforcing the Ontario Building Code and implementing the Ontario Planning Act, is crucial to realizing a vision of inclusive communities that provide access for their residents.

Under the ODA, municipalities must prepare annual accessibility plans describing how they intend to make their community more accessible. Municipalities with 10,000 or more residents must have an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to advise their councils on the development of their accessibility plans.

This Handbook is a resource for Accessibility Advisory Committees. Its purpose is to help them work with their municipalities in fulfilling their obligations as set out in the ODA.

The Handbook is broken down into a series of modules, with each module designed to stand-alone.

The modules are as follows:

Module 1: The ODA and Other Legislation

This module gives an overview of the ODA and other legislation such as the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Ontario Planning Act.

Module 2: Understanding Municipal Government

This module gives an overview of municipal government and is designed to help Accessibility Advisory Committees understand the workings of their municipalities.

Module 3: Accessibility Planning

This module offers information on how to research and write annual accessibility plans.

Module 4: Accessibility Advisory Committees

This module provides information to help Accessibility Advisory Committees work effectively as a group and with their respective municipal councils and staff.

Module 5: Tips, Best Practices and Other Useful Information

This module supports modules one to four by providing additional ideas and best practices from municipalities, organizations and other experts in related fields. It also lists relevant external website addresses.

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Module 1

About the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and Other Legislation

The Purpose of This Module

There are two provincial acts and two provincial codes that relate directly to your work as members of a municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee. They are the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, the Ontario Planning Act and the Ontario Building Code. This module will give you a quick overview of this legislation.

The Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code protects all Ontario residents from discrimination and harassment in specific areas including services, housing, contracts and employment.

Under the code every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status or disability.

Under the code, people with disabilities have the right to be able to access services, jobs and housing and they have the right to assume the same responsibilities and duties as everyone else.

Furthermore, employers, landlords, service providers and others have a duty to consider the needs of people with disabilities. This means using inclusive designs for buildings, processes, programs and services. If systems, physical structures or people's attitudes create discriminatory barriers then they must be removed or changed. Where it is impossible to remove these barriers without undue hardship, then accommodations must be ordered so that people with disabilities can participate fully.

Two other points about the code – first it has primacy over all other provincial legislation including the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. Second, its intent is to remedy the situation for the person or group that has been discriminated against and to prevent further discrimination. The intent is not to punish the individual or company that has discriminated. The Ontario Human Rights Code provides for civil remedies, not criminal penalties.

Persons or companies found to have discriminated can be made to compensate a complainant or make changes in the way they conduct their affairs.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

In December 2001, the provincial government passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA*)* to improve the opportunities for people with disabilities. Under the act, municipalities, regardless of size, must prepare annual accessibility plans and make them available to the public. Municipalities must also include people with disabilities in the planning process, either as members of the committees or as participants in the consulting process.

According to the act, the accessibility plans must look at the barriers that exist in a municipality's buildings, facilities, programs, practices, services, by-laws and policies. The plans must also report on the steps that the municipality has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

In addition, the plan must include the following:

- A report on the measures the municipality has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities
- The measures in place to ensure that the municipality assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities
- A list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the municipality will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities
- The measures that the municipality intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

Finally, the municipality must make the accessibility plan available to the public.

One other point about the accessibility plans: the ODA does not expect municipalities to remove every existing barrier immediately but rather allows for the removal of barriers over time. The act gives municipalities the flexibility to identify their own priorities and to decide on what level of detail they will include in their annual accessibility plans.

That said, however, municipalities must base their plans on sound planning principles and the issues identified during the public consultation process.

Other Requirements Under the Act

The act obliges municipalities to consider accessibility in their planning processes as well as when they buy goods and services from companies, grant business licences and approve plans for subdivisions.

The ODA also obliges municipalities to do the following:

- Consult with people with disabilities and develop accessibility plans for municipal transit systems, which are run by the municipality or contracted out.
- Make sure new social housing units or replacement units include a number of modified units for people with disabilities.
- Increase the minimum penalty for the misuse of parking spaces designated for people with disabilities and enforce the new penalties for those who misuse disabled person parking permits.
- Make local elections and the voting process accessible to people with disabilities, by either locating voting stations in buildings that are accessible or going to the electors' homes so they can vote.

For more information on how to make your local voting facilities accessible, see Module 5, page 50.

For more information about the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and "Complementary Amendments" to other provincial legislation made by the ODA, see Module 5, page 1.

The Ontario Planning Act

The Planning Act provides the legislative framework for land use planning in Ontario. It is the basis for the provincial interests relative to municipal land use planning, local planning administration, the preparation of planning policies, development control, land division, and the public's right to participate in the planning process.

After the provincial government passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, it amended the Ontario Planning Act in two ways.

First, making Ontario accessible for people with disabilities is now a provincial interest. That means that those who have the responsibility for making planning decisions in the municipality and the province shall consider the level of accessibility for people with disabilities to all facilities and services that are guided by the act.

Second, when committees, councils or boards with planning authority look at a plan for a new subdivision, they must also consider accessibility for people with disabilities.

Section 12(5) of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 also specifies that if a municipality has an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), it may request to review site plans and drawings described in Section 41 of the Planning Act (site plan control) that are submitted to support planning applications. Section 12(6) of the act says that municipal councils must supply such drawings to an AAC in a timely manner.

For more information on the Planning Act, see Module 5, page 43.

Official Plans

Official plans are the documents that guide development in municipalities by setting out a municipality's general planning goals and policies. The plan shows how land will be used in different parts of the municipality and is prepared with input from the municipality's citizens and other interested stakeholders.

Municipalities must hold a public meeting at least every five years to determine the need for revision of the official plan.

TIP: The five-year review of the municipality's official plan is a good time for members of the local Accessibility Advisory Committee to participate in the public involvement process and examine the document in detail to suggest changes. Official plan policies, such as those dealing with transportation, parks, housing, urban design and recreation matters may affect how accessible the built environment is for people with disabilities.

Zoning By-laws

Zoning by-laws are the planning tools that establish the rules and regulations that govern development in municipalities. Zoning by-laws put into place the objectives and policies of an official plan and regulate how land is used. For example, zoning commonly classifies land into 'zones' for residential, industrial, commercial or agricultural uses. They may also specify the size of lots, the height of buildings, set backs from the roads or highways, and loading and parking facilities.

With regard to parking facilities, some municipalities also have by-laws passed under the Municipal Act that identify where and how many accessible parking spaces should be provided, as well as other design considerations including the actual dimensions of such spaces (i.e., the required length and width).

Site Planning and Review

The site planning and review process gives municipalities detailed control of a development on a particular site. The types of development that must undergo this approval process are defined in each municipality's site plan control by-laws.

Typically, this process ensures:

- That buildings and associated facilities must be located on each site properly and are of a quality that fit in with surrounding community and adjacent businesses
- Safe and easy access for pedestrians and vehicles is provided
- Suitable landscaping, parking and drainage conditions are provided
- Requirements of other agencies and departments that have jurisdiction are taken into account
- A forum for sharing information and negotiating a "win/win" resolution of site planning issues is provided.

A "site plan" comes in the form of a drawing, or set of drawings, illustrating the physical arrangement of property improvements such as buildings, driveways, parking areas, pedestrian sidewalks, landscaping, fences, exterior lighting and municipal services. Elevations and slopes of walkways may also be reviewed, depending on the type of development. Design standards for site development are set out in a municipality's "site plan control by-law" and related policies. These standards are important considerations from an accessibility perspective and will help your municipality ensure new developments are accessible for all.

Site Planning & Review Process: The Role of Your AAC

Section 12 (6) of the ODA requires municipalities to provide site plans and related drawings to AACs when requested. Recognizing there is a formal approvals process for all planning applications, it is important that site plans requested for review by AACs are provided in a timely fashion by municipal staff, and that AACs respond promptly to prevent any delays in the process. Your AAC should consider establishing its own process to:

1. Identify and prioritize the types of developments to review rather than review every site plan that is submitted. Your AAC may decide to focus on reviewing new developments or to prioritize site plan reviews according to the proposed development use (e.g., community centers, arenas, and civic centres.

2. Determine what accessibility criteria can be used to evaluate each site plan component, in consultation with municipal staff (e.g., exterior walkways, curb ramps, wheelchair ramps to entrances, and exterior lighting conditions, etc.).

   Municipal staff can establish and advise on the accessibility criteria that can or cannot be enforced or whether municipal standards are already in place and can be used during the site plan review process.

   Establish a reporting and monitoring protocol that ensures your municipality consults the AAC on site applications.

TIP: Evaluating Accessibility During Site Plan Review

Addressing accessibility issues early in the process allows for accessibility considerations to be decided in good time.

Municipal planning and building staff should consider requesting accessibility requirements at the same time other “special” requirements such as tree preservation reports, environmental audits, traffic studies are sought.

Accessibility is a key issue that affects the quality of life of many residents and deserves equal attention at the site plan review stage. AACs should commit to working in collaboration with municipal staff, allowing everyone to combine their different levels of expertise – whether technical in nature, or based on life experience. This makes everyone’s roles and responsibilities easier and a collaborative working relationship can be established for the longer-term.

For the most part, barriers to access are created unintentionally during the design process and are largely due to a lack of understanding of the issues. The intent of the ODA is to facilitate AAC involvement in the site plan control review process as early as possible to prevent new barriers from being created. This way everyone benefits – people with disabilities, the developer, the municipality and the community as a whole.

For more guidance, see page 45 in Module 5.

Accessibility Design Criteria

A combination of accessibility design criteria is recommended for reviewing site plans; recognizing the level of accessibility for any project should be evaluated using the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code (OBC), as a starting point. OBC accessibility requirements are generally recognized as minimum standards only and a variety of additional resources should be considered to determine the most suitable level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

An example of criteria that should be used to determine accessibility "beyond the code" includes:

- If established, you may wish to use your municipal accessibility guidelines or standards, or be guided by those of other municipalities (e.g., Cities of Toronto, London and Peterborough).
- Canadian Standards Association "Barrier Free Design" standard, known as CSA B651-95. The CSA standard is currently being revised. For up to date information, visit the Canadian Standards Association website at http://www.csa.ca
- Accessibility "best practices," including design guidelines developed by disability organizations (e.g., CNIB, CPA, CHS) and universal design principles.

For examples of best practices, see Auditing Best Practices on page 48 found in Module 5.

Plans of Subdivision – Ensuring Accessibility

As identified in the previous section, accessibility is an important consideration when reviewing individual site plans for proposed new developments and site-specific applications.

The ODA amends the Ontario Planning Act adding accessibility as a component to consider. This new amendment requires that municipalities "shall have regard to" accessibility when considering draft plans of subdivision. Reviewing applications for plans of subdivision from this perspective is new for municipalities. Your AAC can assist in the process of identifying accessibility issues that need to be addressed. For some municipalities and for some types of new developments, it may not be clear to municipal officials what to look for when considering conditions of approval. Municipal AACs can play an important role in this process.

For more information, see the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's website guide, "Reviewing Plans of Subdivision for Accessibility" at http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_16771_1.html

For a variety of "Citizen's Guides" on information related to land-use planning including topics such as the Planning Act, official plans, and zoning by-laws, for example, please see the Ministry of Municipal Affairs website at http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_8516_1.html

The Ontario Building Code

The Ontario Building Code governs the construction of all new buildings in Ontario. Anyone putting up a new building, making repairs or putting on an addition is required to have a building permit to confirm that the buildings or additions are being constructed according to the code. The code looks at the matter of accessibility under several categories including parking, entrances, elevators, washrooms, halls, ramps, stairs, signs and emergency exits. Generally, municipal planning departments administer and enforce the requirements of the Building Code.

On accessibility, the Building Code outlines what constitutes barrier-free design and stipulates that it applies to all new construction with some exceptions such as new single-family houses. These provisions of the code do not apply to existing buildings unless the owners apply for building permits for major renovations. For example, under the code, if an owner of a building wants to renovate a building's entrance then it must be accessible to people with disabilities.

For information on the Ontario Building Code, see the website at
http://www.obc.mah.gov.on.on.ca/scripts/index_.asp

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Module 2

Understanding Municipal Government

The Purpose of This Module

The purpose of this module is to give members of Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) an overview of how municipal government works.

Municipal Responsibilities

Sometimes referred to as local government (which also includes boards and agencies such as school boards and health units) municipal government is the level of government below the provincial government. Canada's constitution gives the Ontario government, and the country's other provincial and territorial governments, the authority over municipal affairs.

In Ontario, the Municipal Act is one of approximately 150 provincial acts, which set out the powers, duties and structures of the province's 445 municipalities. Under the Municipal Act, municipalities are designated as lower-tier, upper tier or single tier. Lower-tier municipalities are part of upper-tier municipalities. A single-tier municipality is a municipality that is not part of an upper-tier municipality.

While the services provided by municipalities vary, for the most part they include garbage collection and/or disposal, fire, police, water and sewage, local roads, transit and, of course, accessibility.

Upper tier municipalities (also known as regions or counties) are also involved in providing services to residents and businesses. Upper tier councils are made up of representatives from lower tier member municipalities. Their responsibilities are for services that affect those living and working in the entire region such as roads, social assistance and waste management.

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are municipalities that have been designated to deliver particular services on behalf of one or more municipalities. In northern Ontario, District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) are boards that are established to deliver particular services in a way similar to CMSMs, but are comprised of municipalities and areas without municipal organization. These organizations deliver social assistance programs including Ontario Works, social housing and child care services.

For more information on DSSABs, please see Module 3, page 2.

Municipal Councils

Regardless of size, all municipalities are governed by a council elected by the citizens of the municipality.

The role of these elected officials, as defined by provincial legislation includes:

- Representing their constituents at council, for example defending a neighbourhood decision to retain a park and not allow development
- Representing their municipality and their constituents at community events
- Developing and supporting policies that guide the services provided by the municipality
- Passing laws, known at the municipal level as by-laws, such as parking and noise by-laws to regulate the actions of people and businesses in the municipality
- Sitting on council committees such as the waste management or the budget committee
- Deciding on what services and level of service the municipality should offer and how to pay for them, within the parameters of provincial legislation
- Working with other agencies involved in similar issues, for example housing, social services, environment and transportation.

By-laws

By-laws are rules and regulations governing an association or corporation. Municipal councils pass municipal by-laws which can affect the local community such as the number of parking spaces designated for use by people with disabilities or the proceedings of council, its committees, the conduct of its members and so on. For example, some AACs may be expected to manage their meetings according to "Robert's Rules of Order," under their municipality's by-laws (however it is not a requirement of all municipalities), see Module 5, page 16.

For more information about meeting procedures, see Module 4, page 10.

Municipal Committees

Standing Committees

Standing committees are established to undertake a wide range of activities from overseeing administrative operations to conducting hearings, or acting as review bodies. Councillors normally sit on standing committees, while municipal staff act as advisors to committees. On occasion standing committees include members of the public. Councillors may sit on more than one committee.

A municipal standing committee usually focuses on a specific area of business such as planning and development, social housing, public health and community services or public works. Standing committees also provide an overview of the operations of a department of the municipality. They also give an opportunity to debate issues and allow interested groups and individuals to make presentations. The chair of the committee presents regular reports to council and makes recommendations for changes in policies and procedures.

Ad Hoc Committees

Sometimes a standing committee will create an ad hoc committee to investigate and report on a particular matter. Unlike a standing committee, an ad hoc committee is not a legal identity as part of the organizational structure and has no statutory powers.

Executive Committees

Executive committees are usually part of a budget or policy committee.

Citizens' Advisory Committees

Municipalities also have advisory committees, such as the AAC, which are made up of citizens and experts as well as councillors and municipal staff. These committees vary in structure, in responsibility and in length of term.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 sets out the framework for Accessibility Advisory Committees. AACs should be established through a formal motion of council. The motion should include the overall responsibilities as set out in the ODA as well as the details of that specific committee.

For more information about establishing AACs, see the "How To" Guide to Establishing a Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's website at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-howtoguide.htm

Budgets: Finding the Money to Deliver the Services

Municipalities raise money in three main ways: property taxes, fees and charges (i.e. licenses), and transfer payments from the provincial and federal governments. The councils decide on the priorities for the year and how they are going to pay for such activities and services. During the municipal budget process, citizen input is encouraged through a combination of public meetings, committee participation and council meetings. This is a prime opportunity to raise awareness of accessibility issues within the municipal budgeting process.

Budgeting for Accessibility

Some municipalities have a dedicated "accessibility fund" integrated within their yearly budgeting process to ensure accessibility initiatives are implemented over a specific time period. This is considered a best practice as it ensures accessibility recommendations that are brought forward by AACs and municipal staff have financial support behind them.

Municipalities that have adopted a dedicated "accessibility fund" include the cities of Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Peterborough. Dedicated annual funds for accessibility improvements generally range between $50,000 and $75,000. However, this is at the discretion of each municipality based on the needs that are identified.

There is no limit to how much can be reserved in a dedicated accessibility fund by each municipality, however the revenue municipalities may derive from sources such as licensing fees and user fees cannot exceed the municipality's program-related costs.

As an alternative to establishing a dedicated accessibility fund, municipal departments may choose to incorporate accessibility budget planning within their regular budget planning process. Incorporating accessibility issues makes it a natural part of the process, just like other issues. Budgeting for accessibility is a proactive step to ensure accessibility issues are addressed through the implementation of the municipality's annual accessibility plan.

Some municipalities have also hired an accessibility planning coordinator (e.g., the Region of Peel) to facilitate the accessibility planning process in their municipality.

As an example, more information on the City of Peterborough's "Access Fund" can be found in their Accessibility Plan (September 2003), which is available on the City of Peterborough website (Adobe PDF format) at http://www.city.peterborough.on.ca/

Municipal Administration

In addition to council, with its governance responsibilities, every municipality includes staff to administer the policies, programs and services that council has approved, within applicable provincial legislation, guidelines and servicing standards.

Staff also provide the expert advice behind the scenes to assist council members in making their decisions and are a key resource for committees, including Accessibility Advisory Committees. There are different types of citizen advisory committees and/or boards that are established to address other issues, such as arts and culture (e.g., libraries), heritage, transportation and parks and recreation.

Of course, the municipal administrative organization varies greatly depending on the size and complexity of the municipality.

The Policy Process

A policy is a high-level plan or statement that embraces identified goals and sets the direction and/or a course of action to achieve those goals.

Policies, Procedures and Practices

There is often confusion around the difference between policies, procedures and practices. Put simply, a policy is an overall direction (e.g., provide excellent customer service for people with disabilities), a procedure is a way of achieving it (e.g., training for all front line staff) and a practice is what is actually done (e.g., responding to TTY calls within one hour).

A municipality has many policies that cover all its areas of responsibility, including housing, transportation, land-use, and waste collection and disposal to name a few.

Developing Policy

Developing an effective and comprehensive policy usually has a detailed process that includes six basic stages:

- Problem identification -- asking the policy question, "What do we want to achieve?" This stage usually includes research to support the process.
- Priority setting – where the issue gets placed on the political agenda to be addressed among competing issues.
- Policy formulation and design – where policy goals are established, various options are developed and the preferred policy instruments (e.g. legislation, regulations, non-regulatory procedures) for addressing the problem are identified.
- Passage of policy instruments – the stage where approval is received from staff and council for implementing the policy instruments.
- Implementation – this stage activates the policy by delivering the services, programs or funding identified.
- Evaluation – at this stage you review and measure the goals of the policy and whether or not they were achieved, whether there were unintended consequences, and whether the process was effective. The evaluation stage lays the groundwork to fine tune or redesign the policy.

Council Approves Policies, Staff Carry Them Out

Once council has approved a policy it is the responsibility of the municipal administration (the chief administrative officer, the city clerks, standing and executive committees, corporate services and other departments) to put it into action. Municipal staff includes many different professions and experts including engineers, planners, librarians, electricians, computer technicians, social workers, and a wide range of administrative staff who may include, but are not limited to, treasurers, tax collectors, accountants and receptionists. In addition, some staff, such as the Ontario Provincial Police and nurses, may not be considered municipal staff, but work closely with municipalities.

Staff are in a good position to contribute to the evaluation of a policy, to share what works well, and what doesn't.

The ODA and its Effect on Municipal Policies

The ODA has an effect on municipal policies in a variety of areas including housing, transportation, recreation, human resources and communications policies. Annual accessibility planning is intended to directly tap into different policy areas to address accessibility issues.

If the municipality has an overarching policy on accessibility that sets out its broad vision and goals, then the AAC has a roadmap that keeps both itself and the municipality focused. This will help in implementing both short and long-term strategies to consistently identify, remove and prevent barriers in all the various areas of municipal responsibility.

A Word About Planning

"Planning means the scientific, aesthetic and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities."

Source: Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP)

Every municipality is involved in planning of some sort, whether it is for a new sports arena, a shopping mall or a park. Planning decisions made by a municipality today will affect generations to come. Planning helps the municipality set a vision about its future development and its social, economic and environmental goals. Good planning leads to orderly growth and efficient provision of services, this includes giving us the kind of community we want.

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Accessibility Planning

The Purpose of This Module

This module offers members of Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) some tips on how to prepare annual accessibility plans required under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. (ODA).

About the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

The purpose of the act is to help improve opportunities for people with disabilities. The act also ensures that people with disabilities are involved in identifying, removing and preventing barriers that impede their full participation in the life of the province.

Under the act, Ontario municipalities as well as school boards, colleges, universities, hospitals, and public transportation organizations must prepare annual accessibility plans. Ontario government ministries are also required to prepare annual accessibility plans.

The ODA lists five basic requirements for municipal accessibility plans:

1. The plans must report on the measures that municipalities have taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. The plans must describe the existing measures for municipalities to assess their programs, services, by-laws, regulations, policies and practices to determine their effect on accessibility to people with disabilities.
3. The plans must list the policies, programs, practices and services that municipalities will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities.
4. The plans must describe the measures municipalities intend to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
5. The plans must be made available to the public.

Joint Planning

The ODA allows two or more organizations, such as municipalities, school boards, hospital boards, and public transportation organizations, to prepare joint plans. However, if your municipality decides to team up with other municipalities or with the local hospital, for example, there are a few things committee members need to know.

First, the Accessibility Advisory Committee that is preparing the joint plan should include representatives from each of the partners. Second, each partner must approve the joint plan. Next, partners must put into practice their respective components of the plan. Finally, each partner must make the plan public.

Joint Planning in Waterloo

An example of a joint planning effort can be found at the Region of Waterloo, which is working with three existing AACs in the area. The Region appointed the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) to meet its ODA requirements and is a fully participating member of the GRAAC, as a joint initiative along with the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley and Woolwich. Various public sector organizations have also been given responsibilities under the act. More information can be found on the Region of Waterloo's website at http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/accessibility

A Note About Northern Ontario

If your municipality is located in northern Ontario, then your municipality's accessibility plan should include the services delivered by your area District Social Service Administration Board (DSSAB) which handle municipal services such as Ontario Works and social housing.

Alternately, your municipality and the other municipalities within your area District Social Service Administration Board may decide to let the board prepare the plan for the services it delivers. In this case, your municipality would provide the information that the DSSAB requires and would also approve the plan.

An Example of Joint Planning

In a rural area, the county could decide to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee that would provide services to all the local municipalities. In this case, the county would assume the lead for creating the accessibility plan for itself and all the local municipalities. In turn, the local municipalities would assign councillors, staff and resources to the coordinating or working committee for the accessibility plan. That way, all the municipalities would contribute their fair share of time, effort and ideas to the plan.

Furthermore, local school and hospital boards could decide to join in and work with the county and the working committee on the accessibility plan.

The school and hospital boards would contribute staff time and provide the information necessary for these sections.

By taking this route, the county and municipal councils and the school and hospital boards would save money and staff time by producing one plan that worked for all and later by organizing one joint accessibility audit.

For other examples of how joint plans can work, please see the Accessibility Directorate's Guide to Municipal Accessibility Planning – Joint Planning, available online at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-planningguidelines.htm

Two Definitions to Guide You in Your Work

The Definition of Disability

Briefly, the ODA adopts the definition of disability from the Ontario Human Rights Code and defines disability broadly to include mental and intellectual disabilities as well as physical disabilities. The definition also encompasses learning disabilities, mental disorders, and injuries or disabilities for which benefits were claimed and received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

TIPS for Understanding Disability

Always view disability from the perspective that everyone experiences differences in abilities throughout their lifespan, from childhood to old age, from temporary disabilities to permanent ones, hidden or visible. Understanding disabilities from a "cross disability" perspective is also important (e.g., there are many types of disabilities beyond the recognizable "person who uses a wheelchair") – this recognizes everyone's diverse needs.

Keep in mind that people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. Disabilities may be:

- Visible or hidden (e.g., mobility impairment versus an emotional disability)
- Severe or mild (e.g., complete paralysis versus minor speech impairments)
- Singular or multiple (e.g., Diabetes, which can cause blindness, often causes loss in sensation in the fingers as well)
- Chronic or intermittent (e.g., seizure disorders)

Additionally, disabilities may be:

- Inherited at birth (e.g., determined by genes)
- Environmentally determined (e.g., accident or injury)
- Resulting from an unknown cause (e.g., some mental illnesses).

Adapted from: Planning a Barrier-Free City of Toronto; A statement of planning principles, prepared for The Toronto Joint Citizens' Committee for People with Disabilities, 2003. See this document online at http://www.sph-planning-consulting.ca/documents/TJCC_May2003%20(SPH).pdf

For the full definition of disability under the ODA see the Guide to Municipal Accessibility Planning online at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-planningguidelines.htm#appendixC

For a fuller discussion about types of disabilities see the Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning online at http:/www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibleplanningguide.htm#102

The Definition of Barrier

A barrier is anything that prevents people with disabilities from fully participating in all aspects of society. Barriers are diverse and come in different forms:

- Hard to turn doorknobs or heavy doors can be barriers for older men and women as well as for people with limited upper body mobility and strength.
- Confusing messages, too many words and minimal graphics used on brochures and pamphlets may prevent proper communication of information to users, including people with learning disabilities.
- Steps and narrow doors are barriers to people using wheelchairs.
- Small print sizes and hard to read fonts can be barriers to people with low vision.
- Everyday practices such as announcing messages over intercoms may be barriers for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
- Barriers can also be the result of the attitude of a front line person such as a receptionist who ignores a client or customer with a developmental disability.

For a full list of different types of barriers, please see the Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning – Barriers at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibleplanningguide.htm

More information on common types of attitudinal barriers can be found in Module 5, page 27.

The Accessibility Plan

First Steps – Getting Organized

Setting up a Working Group

The municipality and your Accessibility Advisory Committee may want to set up a working group to research, develop or update the accessibility plan. Ideally, this group should include senior staff such as the chief administrative officer or your municipal equivalent, as they are often responsible for submitting the plan to municipal council for approval. Other members of this working committee may vary depending on the size of your municipality or the number of municipalities and boards participating in a joint plan. Since the working group will review the operations, policies and practices of departments within the municipalities or boards, the working group should include representatives from each department.

Talking to Potential Partners

If your municipality is working with other municipalities or local organizations on a joint plan, then the working group should have representatives from each of the participants. Similarly, if your municipality is working with another municipality or organization on a project – such as a new wing for the hospital—the working group should review that project for accessibility.

Next Steps – Reviewing the Past, Looking at the Present

Reviewing the Past

Each annual accessibility plan must state what steps your municipality has taken in the past to remove barriers and prevent new ones from being created. If your municipality prepared an accessibility plan last year, then the working group will want to review the plan to chart the municipality's progress.

The working group will want to compile information on what staff members have done in the past to identify or prevent barriers. For example, a building manager may have sought advice when an auditorium was being retrofitted on how to make it wheelchair accessible. Or, the person responsible for maintaining the municipality's website may have taken a course on creating accessible web pages.

The working group may also want to look at the log of complaints or suggestions received by your municipality in the past year for barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Looking at the Present

At this point, the municipality reviews its operations and processes to flag existing or potential barriers. The review may range from accessibility of public meetings to the way the municipality handles suggestions and complaints; from how the municipality communicates with the public and its staff members, to who is involved in the decision-making processes for amendments to by-laws and approvals of site plans.

This review, for example, will discover whether or not the municipality's by-laws hinder or help improve accessibility for people with disabilities when councillors and planning board members consider site plans for new developments such as shopping malls, parks and arenas.

The following list includes examples of what the municipality would review at this point in the process:

- Site plans
- Building plans of new municipal facilities
- Municipal by-laws
- Municipal renovations, leased offices or other municipal buildings
- External service providers
- Purchases – goods and services provided by the municipality
- Employment practices and accommodations
- Communications and publications
- Planning practices
- Current capital plan
- Operational policies

TIP: One way the working group can help here is to put the areas for review in order of priority and flag existing by-laws that relate directly to accessibility.

Tools to Help Planning

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario has developed a questionnaire to help municipalities determine their "Accessibility Quotient." The survey helps you assess how your municipality is doing on many fronts including maintenance, transportation, accommodation, municipal building design, land-use planning and the delivery of services.

The directorate has also prepared a list called "Where to Look for Barriers." The list is divided into nine categories ranging from the built environment, to policies and practices, to technology and the Internet. The list is designed to help working groups break up the review of a municipality's operations and processes into manageable pieces.

See the Municipal Accessibility Quotient Questionnaire online at
http:/www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/English/accessibilityquotient.htm

For information about policy development and examples of policies that demonstrate best practices in accessibility, see Module 5, page 4.

For a sample of auditing checklists and related best practices, see Module 5, page 57.

Final Steps – Creating the Plan

Setting Priorities and Developing Strategies

Once the working group has identified the barriers that exist, its members now decide which barriers the municipality will remove in the coming year and decide on how to do it.

The directorate suggests breaking up this part of the process into the following steps:

First, the working group selects the barriers and determines their priority. As an example, removing physical and architectural barriers in municipal facilities, barriers found in buildings that are used by many people, such as municipal offices or community and recreation centers could be at the top of the list. Barriers found to negatively impact services that are used frequently by people with disabilities should also be a top priority.

Second, the working group decides how the municipality will remove existing barriers and prevent the creation of new ones. For each barrier, the group sets down an objective and writes a short description of the ways to achieve it.

Third, the working group looks at the money and the staff available for the projects earmarked for that year, and writes a budget and timetable for each barrier. Some barriers can be eliminated at little or no cost. For example, receptionists can be taught to look at members of the public while talking so that those who read lips can see them speaking.

Other barriers such as long and winding staircases in historical buildings may be too expensive to overcome in one year. The working group may decide to divide the project up into stages and do the project over several years.

Fourth, the working group decides on how it will measure the progress made on eliminating each barrier and assigns a member of the group or municipal staff member to follow the progress and report back.

The working groups can use formal and informal methods for gathering data on the effectiveness of strategies to remove and prevent barriers. Informal processes include talking to people who have disabilities and asking them for their feedback. Formal processes include suggestion boxes, questionnaires, community forums and focus groups.

More information on prioritizing barrier removal is provided in the next section of this module, see page 58.

Writing and Consulting

Community consultation is an ODA requirement that can provide important feedback and insights into the development of municipal accessibility plans. Consultation is a continuous process that involves the collaboration of municipal staff, AAC members and many community stakeholders including people with disabilities, their families and staff members of associations for people with disabilities. The consultation process ensures that accessibility issues are addressed and all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide comments on the plan. For some municipalities, it may be helpful for municipal staff to coordinate the writing of the plan in collaboration with the AAC and input from stakeholders.

Submitting the Plan to Council

The accessibility plan is complete when council has approved it. At this point the council must make it public. Many municipalities post their plans on their websites and in public places such as the local public libraries.

TIP: Strategic Planning

Step back and identify what is preventing your municipality from improving accessibility. Identify various strategic directions and then prioritize them by asking the following questions:

Which strategies or action items can we do within 1 year? …5?…10 ?...etc.
Which actions are the most exciting?
Which actions are the most frustrating?
Which actions are the easiest to accomplish?
Which ones will be the hardest to accomplish?
Which ones will have the most impact?
Which ones are most important for the committee?
Which strategies are you most committed to work on?

Asking these questions can help you plan more strategically – which is an effective, positive and a forward-thinking way to plan for accessibility.

Prioritizing Barriers
- Planning for Barrier Removal in Your Municipality

Priorities for barrier removal can be made based on a variety of criteria, including practicality, feasibility, engagement/participation and impact, as examples. The following questions will help your municipality and AAC prioritize actions to remove barriers [*]. This is a starting point as there are many other examples of suitable criteria that can be used and explored further by your municipality.

A. Practicality

- Will the strategy lead to accomplishing your outcome?
- Is it a logical way to accomplish your goals?
- Has it been tried in your community or somewhere else? (e.g., is it a best practice?)
- Has it worked?
- Does common sense or logic suggest that it will work?
- Does research or expert opinion support the strategy? How?

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[*] Source: Adapted from the Center for Collaborative Planning's "Working Collaboratively: Prioritizing Barriers" Guide (No Date).

B. Feasibility

- Have local resources been identified to accomplish this strategy?
- Can these local resources be effectively mobilized?
- Have additional or outside resources been identified, if needed?
- Is the strategy technically feasible (in terms of skills and equipment, for example)?
- Is it cost-effective?
- Are there strategies that could be accomplished right away? Should we do these first to have a short-term success?

C. Engagement & Participation

- Are there opportunities for community and AAC involvement?
- Do community members who are most affected by a strategy play a part in implementing the strategy?
- Are strategies acceptable to community members?
- Has there been coordination with other organizations, advocates, coalitions or partners?
- Are strategies consistent with mission, values, philosophy and culture of your municipality and AAC?

D. Impact

- Does the strategy address the barriers identified?
- Will the strategy have a long-term impact?
- Will strategies impact many people in the community?
- Will strategies create significant change(s)? How?
- Are there any health and safety concerns or impacts?

TIPS: Some Practical Considerations

- Identifying creative solutions for removing barriers to access requires careful thought and informed planning.
- Everyone is affected by disability at some point in their lives – whether personally or indirectly through the experiences of family, friends or co-workers.
- Solutions to access problems aren't expensive or cost prohibitive – this is a myth. When accessibility is considered at the design stage (whether it is a policy, practice or facility) there is limited or zero additional cost. Bad design is simply bad design – when usability is diminished for anyone, barriers are created.
- Access solutions benefit all users of the built environment – this means the quality of life of your entire community. A universal approach should always be considered for designing, planning, and developing any initiative – whether it is an environment, policy, service, program or procedure.

More Tools for Planning and Writing an Accessibility Plan

The Accessibility Directorate has developed a template for Municipal Accessibility Plans, which working groups can adapt to suit the needs of their municipalities as well as a sample accessibility plan to give working groups an idea of what a plan might look like and include.

The directorate has also gathered best practices of how some municipalities and local organizations have developed or put into place their accessibility plans.

For the Accessibility Planning Template, see the Guide to Municipal Accessibility Planning online at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-planningguidelines.htm

For municipal success stories, visit the Accessibility Ontario website at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/bestpractice.htm and see Module 5, page 42.

For information on universal design, that is design that is accessible by everyone, please see Module 5, page 57. There you will find detailed descriptions on the principles of universal design and how to conduct audits based on these principles.

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Module 4

Accessibility Advisory Committees

The Purpose of This Module

The ideas discussed in this module are intended to help members of Accessibility Advisory Committees (AACs) to work effectively as committees, as individuals and with their municipal councils and staff.

About Accessibility Advisory Committees

Under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) all municipalities of 10,000 or more residents must establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee to advise council on how to make the municipality more accessible to people with disabilities.

Municipalities must have a Terms of Reference for their Accessibility Advisory Committees setting out such things as the roles and responsibilities of the committee, its membership and structure, how it will function, its life span and payment for expenses and time.

For more detailed information about Accessibility Advisory Committees, please see the following resources:

- The Accessibility Directorate's "How To" Guide to Establishing a Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) available on the ministry's website at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/index.html
- Module 5, page 4.

Developing an Effective Terms of Reference

Establishing standing committees of council, citizen advisory groups and joint committees (e.g., with other community organizations or municipalities) is often a routine role in the administration of municipal government. Where applicable, existing municipal practices that are routinely used in establishing advisory groups and committees should guide the formal establishment of your AAC.

Developing a Terms of Reference for an Accessibility Advisory Committee that is a committee of council is similar to establishing other committees mandated by council. Additionally, your municipal council may wish to conduct public consultations with people with disabilities and the broader community to ensure that the mandate for your AAC reflects local accessibility issues.

An effective Terms of Reference to guide the work of your AAC involves several important considerations, including the following:

1. Mandate

Asks the question: What are the roles and responsibilities of your AAC?

2. Committee Membership

Asks the questions: Who will be on your AAC? How many members will your AAC have?

Section 12(3) of the ODA states, in reference to municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees, that "a majority of the members of the committee shall include persons with disabilities."

3. Committee Structure

Asks the questions: What type of membership does your AAC have? (e.g., how many city council representatives, community representatives, other stakeholders, etc?). What types of disabilities are represented by your AAC? What type of staff support is provided?

4. Committee Procedures

Asks the question: How will your AAC function when dealing with issues and its membership?

5. Remuneration for Expenses

"Remuneration" is a fancy term for "payment." Many AAC members have identified a need to be compensated for additional expenses as an important consideration. For example, some AAC members may have additional expenses related to transportation that often has an impact on their level of participation. Additional expenses may also make it more difficult for municipalities to recruit members for their AAC. Overall, municipalities should consider that AAC members are volunteering considerable time and commitment to their roles and members should be compensated for any additional expenses in a manner similar to other municipal advisory committees.

6. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest may arise for committee members when their personal or business interests clash with the duties and decisions of the committee. Provincial legislation specific to municipalities governs conflict of interest for councillors and as a result, many municipalities have created their own conflict of interest guidelines. Conflict of interest as defined by legislation applies to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and all municipal guidelines in place regarding conflict of interest should also apply to AAC members.

If your AAC has not developed a Terms of Reference, refer to the Accessibility Directorate's "How To" Guide to Establishing A Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for more guidance and as a starting point. This guide is available on the ministry's website at http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-howtoguide.htm

TIPS: Sample Terms of References for Municipal AACs

A sample of existing AAC Terms of References that have been developed by municipalities are available online for your reference. Links to these examples are provided to assist AACs who are working towards establishing their own Terms of Reference, including formal structures and procedures. Samples can be found at:

- The City of London (Adobe PDF format) http://www.city.london.on.ca/Planning/AAC_termsofreference.pdf
- The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee http://www.city.kitchener.on.ca/committee/accessibility/GRAAC_terms_reference.pdf
- The Region of York http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Community+Services+and+Housing/Ontarians+with+Disabilities+Act+(ODA).htm

TIP: Region of Halton "Terms of Reference Template for Citizen Advisory Committees" and "Guide to Participating on Citizens Committees – Guidelines for the Public" (Spring 2004)

As identified in a recent staff report, Halton Region undertook a complete review of the Terms of Reference for all of their Citizen Advisory Committees in an effort to improve their "quality and content." The staff template and the public guidelines were designed to "provide uniformity in terms of procedural, reporting and administrative matters" for all committees. These guidelines may be a useful resource for other AACs and municipalities to review, consider and adapt.

A copy of the staff report, template and guidelines is available on the Region of Halton website (Adobe PDF format) at http://www.region.york.on.ca/Departments/Community+Services+and+Housing/Ontario+with+Disabilities+Act+(ODA).htm

Coming Together as a Team

An effective Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) requires the skills, experience and input of all its members working together for a common purpose. The following discussion provides some tools and techniques to help you work as a team.

Ground Rules

Establish some ground rules up front. They will help your committee work as an effective team and avoid the problems that committees can run into. Ground rules can be a mixture of formal procedures (rules of conduct as stated in your municipality's procedural by-laws) and informal.

There is no correct set of ground rules but here are some ideas:

- Assumptions are stated up front.
- Agreement is reached on how members will conduct themselves.
- Agendas are distributed ahead of time so that all members can come prepared.
- Meetings always begin and end on time.
- All members arrive on time and prepared for the meeting (e.g. they should have reviewed the agenda).
- Members are open-minded and receptive to all ideas.

- Members respond out loud but speak in order. No side conversations, no muttering, no interrupting.
- No finger-pointing or assigning blame for problems. Every problem is a committee problem. Use "I" statements.
- It is okay to disagree.
- Maintain confidentiality, the team's processes are the team's business. Don't discuss outside of the team.
- Summarize and clarify all team decisions at the end of each meeting.
- Celebrate successes, have fun!

For more ideas on how to work as a group, see Module 5, page 7.

It's All About Teamwork[*]

Even with ground rules committees go through growing pains and different stages of development. Working in teams takes time and patience – it is rare for a newly formed group to instantly work effectively as a team.

Here are some ways to tell if your committee is working like a team:

- There is an informal, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere when you are together.
- Members have a high degree of confidence and trust in one another.
- Members co-operate and collaborate.
- Members listen to one another and respect differences and the issues affecting the widest range of disabilities.
- Constructive criticism is frequent, frank and comfortable.
- Free expression of ideas and feelings is embraced.
- No one dominates the meeting.
- Each person's skills and contributions are acknowledged and respected.

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[*] Source: Adapted from the Iowa State University Extension's "Group Decision Making Toolkit".

TIP: Check out the statements below. They'll help you figure out where you think your team is. Don't worry if you feel as if the first three are statements you might make about your group, it is all part of coming together as a team. If the latter two sound more like statements you might make, then your committee is coming along nicely.

- I am so frustrated – all we seem to do is argue and nothing gets done.
- I like the team well enough but we're not very efficient at making decisions.
- No one says anything so nothing changes.
- Being a member of this committee is a very positive experience. We have some issues but we work them out and we're ahead of schedule in meeting our goals.
- Our committee is really energized. We work well together, come up with great ideas and everyone is committed to doing their part.

There is more information about coming together as team in Module 5, page 8.

Problem Solving, Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

Problem Solving

All organizations, committees and individuals have times when they are faced with difficult problems to solve and decisions to make. For a group to be successful it must find creative methods to solve problems and to focus on reaching its goals.

Problem solving is a set of activities designed to analyze a situation systematically to generate, implement and evaluate solutions. It's really about creating choices. Decision-making is a mechanism for making choices at each step of the problem-solving process. Decision-making is part of problem solving.

Here are some things to remember when problem solving:

- Don't press and bicker about your own views. Present your position logically, then listen to the reactions of other members and consider them carefully. Try to get underlying assumptions out in the open so they can be discussed.

- Don't look for a winner or a loser in each discussion. Look for the most acceptable alternative to all parties.

- Don't change your mind just to avoid conflict. Appreciate differences of opinion, they are natural and to be expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision process. Disagreements can help the group's decision because with a wide range of information and opinions there is a greater chance the group will come up with more effective solutions.

Problem solving involves coming up with alternatives. There are three main ways to do this: brainstorming, conducting surveys and holding discussion groups.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be done individually or as a group. It requires an environment where participants are free to think out loud. Participants can blurt out as many ideas as possible within a specified time period. No evaluation of ideas is permitted. This encourages the free flow of ideas. The ideas are recorded. When the time period ends the evaluation of the ideas begins.

Surveys

Surveys tap into the ideas of a large group of respondents. Surveys present respondents with the problem and a series of alternative solutions from which they can chose.

Discussion Groups

Discussion groups, made up of those directly involved in decision making, should avoid initial judgments, and focus on the problem – not on the personalities of people involved in the process.

Reaching the Decision

Once you have some choices to consider, there are several ways for your committee to make the decision including straw polling, voting and consensus.

Straw Polling

Straw polling asks for a show of hands, but alternate ways can be devised to make it accessible for everyone (e.g., combination of verbal and visual signals). In general, straw polling is a quick check that can save a lot of time. To make straw polling continuous, the group needs to agree on a set of "signals" everyone will use throughout the meeting. These signals enable people to gauge how others are reacting. Signals also provide feedback for a speaker who is trying to work with a large group.

Voting

Voting is a decision-making method that is best suited to large groups. To avoid alienating minorities, the group can decide a motion will only succeed if it receives a two-thirds majority. Or the group could decide to combine voting with consensus (see below). Small groups usually follow informal consensus procedures. However, large or more formal groups generally follow "Robert's Rules of Order."

In order to avoid stacked meetings, some community groups limit the privilege of voting to people who have come to three or more consecutive meetings. Voting usually means deciding between X and Y. Sometimes voting allows a proportional solution such as part X and part Y.

For more about Roberts Rules of Order, see Module 5, page 16.

Consensus

The consensus process aims at bringing the group to mutual agreement by addressing all concerns. It does not require unanimity. Consensus can take longer than other processes but it fosters creativity, cooperation and commitment to final decisions.

For more detailed information on consensus building, see Module 5, page 22.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts sometimes arise because of the different beliefs, experiences and values that come to a committee table. While members may agree as a committee on an overall goal, individual members may strongly disagree about the way to achieve the goal.

Differences of opinion and conflict become a problem if not properly managed and can harm the otherwise positive working relationships between members. Conflict can spread like wild fire. It may start with one or two members and quickly affect others leading to a dysfunctional committee. Steps need to be taken immediately to deal with it.

Here are some ideas that will help deal with conflict*:

- Treat one another with respect.
- Recognize diversity. Understand and value members' different backgrounds, perspectives, cultures, languages, training and points of view.
- Confront the problem. Talk over the disagreement with the other person. Choose a place where you are both comfortable (neutral turf), and speak calmly.
- Define the conflict. Describe the problem in clear, concrete terms. Be specific and don't use inflammatory language. Focus on the behaviour, not the person. Use the "I" word not the "You" word.
- Communicate understanding. Listen to understand the other person's feelings and needs. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Try to imagine how the other person sees things. Explain how you see the problem after you've talked about it. Be quick to express any changes to your views, which you may have made as a result of your conversation.
- Explore alternative solutions. Take turns offering alternative ideas. Be nonjudgmental of the other person's ideas – assume good intentions. Think and talk positively.
- Reach an agreement on the most workable solution. Agree to a solution you both understand and can live with. Work to find a win-win solution. Be committed to resolving the conflict.

You can find more information in Module 5,on page 22.

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* Source: Adapted from the Centre for Collaborative Planning's "Collaboration: Concepts to Consider" Guide. Available online at: http://www.connectccp.org.

The Role of the Committee Chair

Leadership

While the role of the chair includes many responsibilities, none is more important than being an effective leader. Leaders fall into two main camps: the traditional and the facilitative leader. The main differences are as follows:

Traditional – assumes leadership; provides structure and control; tells; uses control (uses personal power, makes all the decisions); expects uniformity; uses authority to get things done.

Facilitative – shares leadership; provides direction; asks questions and listens; involves others (builds consensus, shares in setting common goals, recognizes differences in a group); empowers others to get things done.

Because facilitative leaders recognize the importance and contribution of the whole team, they are most likely to get the best from the group.

Here are some tips on how to be a facilitative leader[*]:

- Return a question to the person in the group who asked it, so you do not take responsibility for all the answers.
  Team member: "I don't like the approach we're taking here."
  Leader: "What do you think we should be doing?"

- Make sure everyone is working on the same content, using the same process at the same time.
  Leader: "Let's stay focused on identifying the problems."

- Name something that isn't working to get it out in the open where it can be worked on.
  Leader: "It's very quiet here. What does the silence mean?"

- Prevent lengthy arguments and process battles about what is the 'right' way to proceed.
  Leader: "There are many approaches that will work. Let's decide on one so we can keep moving forward."

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[*] Source: Schulich School of Business, York University, Division of Executive Development's "Facilitative Leadership Course Handouts" (June 1998).

- Use body language to reinforce your words. Ask questions with palms open – showing that you are open to hearing from the group. Write on a flip chart to focus the group on the problem. Repeat what you are writing so people who are blind, or have low vision also know what is being written.

For more information, see Module 5, page 20.

Chairing a Meeting

A successful meeting takes preparation. Here are some things to consider:

Before the Meeting

- Who, what, when, where, why and how many? Of course always consider accessibility as you go through this list.
- Send out an agenda in advance that focuses on the why, when and where?
- Ensure you have verified all accommodations such as: interpreters, special equipment, dietary requirements, etc.
- If you don't have a permanent designated secretary, make sure you have someone to take notes for distribution after the meeting.
- Arrive early. Check the room layout, for example, that there are enough chairs, that there are no temporary barriers in place. Ensure tables and chairs are set up to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters. ASL interpreters should sit across from participants who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. If there is a flip chart, are there markers? Set out an agenda at each place (it will help keep the meeting focused) and any other materials that you may be using.

At the Start of the Meeting

- Start on time – stop all side conversations, get everyone's attention.
- Ask participants, interpreters, captionists, interveners, note takers and guests to introduce themselves. Remind participants to identify themselves before speaking for the benefit of participants who are visually impaired.
- Inform participants of the nearest emergency exits and accessible washrooms.
- Encourage clear speech at a moderate pace. This will help interpreters, note-takers and others to communicate with people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- Review the agenda and make any revisions necessary.
- Set clear time limits. For longer meetings, indicate when you will have breaks.
- Review action items from the previous meetings.

During the Meeting

- Use your leadership skills!
- A chair's responsibility includes determining speaking order, facilitating motions and ensuring there are seconders, facilitating decorum and appropriate behaviour, and ruling on procedures.

At the End of the Meeting

- Confirm the action items: who, when and what?
- Set the date and place for the next meeting, develop a preliminary agenda.
- Close the meeting positively and summarize key decisions.

Follow-up

- Ensure secretary, clerk or chair sends out meeting notes – particularly the action items.

Conducting Meeting Reviews

It is well advised for the chair of the ACC to conduct periodic meeting reviews with the committee. This will help identify what is working and what is not. For instance:

- Are the meetings running smoothly? Are they well attended?
- Are the meetings accomplishing the desired outcomes?
- Is the committee working well as a group? Is there room for improvement?

A review can be a few minutes at the end of a regular meeting, or a longer meeting specifically held to conduct a review. It can be an opportunity to acknowledge successes and give and receive direct feedback. It is also a chance to change a procedure or arrangement, ranging from decision making to ordering refreshments.

If your review is a formal review of your meetings, then you might need to do follow up, one-on-one interviews with participants to get more information. A more formal review would also warrant a detailed evaluation report.

Regular meeting reviews will help to make sure that your committee meetings are effective, which in turn will ensure that your team is sustainable as a group working to make your community inclusive and accessible.

Other Responsibilities of a Committee Chair

A chairperson has many more duties than being a leader and chairing meetings. The chairperson usually signs committee correspondence, represents the committee at council meetings, and acts as community representative for the AAC during special events.

For more information on how to be an effective chairperson, see Module 5, page 18.

Establishing Subcommittees

Establishing a subcommittee can be an effective way to concentrate on a specific issue or to address projects or initiatives according to municipal priorities. For example, a subcommittee could focus on issues related to housing, employment, education, transportation and parking. A subcommittee is an excellent way to make progress on implementation issues and move things forward outside of the activities of the full committee.

Like the full committee, a subcommittee will require a Terms of Reference that lays out its mandate, membership, specifics as to what it is to address and the deliverables, timeframes, etc.

TIP: The City of London includes the possibility of establishing subcommittees in its AAC's Terms of Reference:

"The Advisory Committee may form subcommittees and working groups as may be necessary to address specific issues, noting that clerks do not provide secretarial support to these groups. These subcommittees and working groups shall draw upon members of the advisory committee as well as outside resource members as deemed necessary. The chair of the subcommittee and/or working group shall be a voting member of the advisory committee."

Working with Municipal Council and Staff

Creating a direct link between your municipal council and your Accessibility Advisory Committee is an important step in advancing your accessibility goals. Remember your committee is only one of many interests fighting for attention and for limited resources.

Getting to know your head of council and your councillors is very important.

Head of Council

The head of council – the mayor or the reeve – sets the tone and can influence priorities through his or her leadership during the term of council. While mayors and reeves, like other councillors, have only one vote, they often have considerable clout and can influence the way in which others vote.

The mayor is also crucial in developing the political will to create an accessibility-friendly council.

Councillors

Councillors have different roles both informal and formal in their work as elected politicians. Some focus on issues related to their particular community and bring local concerns to the table. Others get more involved in municipality-wide issues. Some are more skilled at resolving conflicts, seeking change, acting as motivators and/or persuaders than other councillors are.

Strategies to Get the Attention of Council and Staff

There are a number of things your committee can do to bring its ideas and work to the attention of the municipality. Most of these ideas require some homework:

- Know what you are trying to influence. Is it a change in policy or details of administration? Is it a political or an administrative decision? Should you be dealing with politicians or staff?

- Know the decision-making process and what body or individuals make the decisions. Work closely with councillors who have positive track records on accessibility issues. Consider having constituents contact the councillors. Remember, it is often better that the point of contact reflects individuals and organizations that the councillor will rely on for further support.

- Understand the perspective of the decision-makers – what do their voting records look like?
- Be prepared to brief councillors. Use plain language. Make it easy to understand. Keep it short; remember a busy councillor is more likely to read a short report than a long one.
- Know the insiders/support personnel who can help. Assistants, secretaries and other municipal staff can be invaluable in getting information to councillors.
- Know who may not support you or be opposed to your positions. What is their interest? Is there a way to win them over? Would an information campaign or a disability awareness simulation exercise help?
- Use a variety of mechanisms to get your council's attention and support. Consider using council roundtables, focus groups, facility tours (audits), petitions, declarations (e.g. disability awareness day), town hall meetings, and all candidates meetings.

For more ideas on how to involve, educate and garner the support of municipal council and staff, see Module 5, page 20.

The Role of Advisor

An advisor is one who gives advice to another. An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another.

Many committee members have worked as advocates for people with disabilities and while, as an accessibility advisory council, you are advocating for change, your main job is to advise council. This advice is done in the context of the annual accessibility plan and is about such things as site plans of new and existing municipal buildings (as described in section 41 of the Planning Act), new and existing by-laws, significant renovations of city-owned buildings and purchasing practices.

As an advocate you may be focused on a particular disability and on a particular issue such as transportation. However, as an advisor, things must be considered from a broad perspective. As a member of the committee, you will need to consider cross-disability issues and accept that different issues will be at the forefront at different times and that the context and budget to address local issues must be considered when providing advice.

For more information, see Module 5, page 27.

Community-Based Partnerships

Accessibility Advisory Committees may wish to consider getting involved in a community-based partnership to help achieve your goals to make your community more accessible.

Community-based partnerships include a variety of initiatives and involve working on a project or projects that have an impact on the whole community, as opposed to a single organization. Community partnerships can involve local businesses, agencies and institutions and other organizations, as well as individuals.

TIP: Common characteristics of community-based partnerships:

- Insist on local participation and empowerment.
- Encourage organizational and partnership development.
- Support local entrepreneurs and businesses.
- Enhance local and collective skills.
- Are a means as well as an end – the process of partnering and its outcomes are both important.
- Are for the community, by the community.
- Often integrate several areas of development (social, economic, environmental and cultural, etc.).
- Have a desire for change – question the status quo.

For more information on community-based partnerships, please see the following resources:

- The Partnership Handbook, developed by Human Resources Development Canada, talks about the 10 steps in the process of developing an effective partnership. You can find a copy on the website at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml&hs=cyd

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Module 5

Tips, Best Practices and Other Useful Information

The Purpose of This Module

This module provides information beyond that which is covered in modules one to four. This information can be read separately or as a compendium to the other modules.

About Legislation

The following legislation has an important impact on accessibility planning in your municipality:

- The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/act2001.htm
- The Ontario Human Rights Code (http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/code/index.shtml)
- The Planning Act (http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/90p13_e.htm)
- The Ontario Building Code (http://www.obc.mah.gov.on.ca/scripts/index_.asp)
- The Municipal Act, 2001 (http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/01m25_e.htm)

Additionally, the ODA makes "complementary amendments" to other provincial legislation, including the Election Act, Election Finances Act, Highway Traffic Act, Legislative Assembly Act, Municipal Elections Act (1996) and the Social Housing Reform Act (2000).

About Municipal Government

Websites of Interest

The **Association of Municipalities of Ontario** (AMO) works with and for municipal government. The association is involved in inter-government relations, policy development, and information gathering and sharing about issues affecting municipalities. AMO's website address is: www.amo.on.ca.

AMO has also created a special website called "Your Local Government," to help people learn about and understand local municipal government. You can reach it through the AMO site or directly at: www.yourlocalgovernment.com.

Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario (AFMO) is an Ontario association of Francophone municipalities at: www.afmo.on.ca/

The **Rural Ontario Municipal Association** (ROMA) is the rural affiliate of AMO. It has its own website at: www.roma.on.ca.

The **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing** also has information about municipalities, particularly as it relates to the relationship between the provincial and the municipal levels of government.

You will also find information about the Municipal Act and the Ontario Building Code on this website. The website address is www.mah.gov.on.ca.

About Accessibility Planning

The following links and resources provide useful information on municipal obligations and accessibility planning:

- A Guide to Municipal Accessibility Planning (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-planningguidelines.htm)
- A Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibleplanningguide.htm)
- Municipal Obligations (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations.htm)
- How to engage the disability community. A listing of Ontario's disability organizations (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/enablelink.htm)
- What is your Municipality's AQ – Accessibility Quotient?: An exercise to determine the accessibility of your municipality (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessibilityquotient.htm)
- Municipal Questions & Answers – March 2003 (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/municipalitiesqsandas-0303.htm)
- FAQ (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/faq.htm)
- Municipal Resource Package on Designated Parking for Persons with Disabilities (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/parkingbylaw.htm)
- "How To" Guide to Establishing a Municipal Advisory Accessibility Committee (AAC) (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/munobligations-howtoguide.htm)
- Best Practices (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/bestpractice.htm)

Policy Development

Best Practices

Policies that demonstrate best practices in accessibility that are available on-line include:

- City of Ottawa Multiple Formats Policy

  (http://www.ottawa.ca/city_services/accessibility/multi_format_en.shtml)

- City of Guelph Barrier Free Policy Statement

  (http://www.city.guelph.on.ca/document.cfm?documentid=5450&category=167)

- City of Toronto Official Plan Accessibility Policy
  - Statements and Principles

  (http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/torontoplan/official_plan.htm#4)

- Region of York Accessibility Plan Policy Framework (Adobe PDF format)

  (http://www.region.york.on.ca/NR/rdonlyres/4567hxn6qnpiblh4ai7nwumrk26oj35epsedrgtalg57s3isgrz43widrq4sz6xsjr63jndmlazh2ml6l5f37adjke/policy+Framework.pdf)

- City of Winnipeg Universal Design Policy (Adobe PDF format)

  (http://www.city.winnipeg.mb.ca/clkdmis/documents/epc/2002/a1161/01. universal design.pdf)

Inclusive Policies

You can also consider the following characteristics of inclusion and how they could be adapted and integrated to develop a formal accessibility policy for your municipality:

- **Integration and co-operative** – inclusive communities bring people together and are places where people and organizations work together.
- **Interactive** – inclusive communities have accessible community spaces and open public places as well as groups and organizations that support social interaction and community activity, including celebrating community life.
- **Invested** – inclusive communities are places where both the public and private sectors commit to resources for the social and economic health and well being of the whole community.
- **Diverse** – inclusive communities welcome and incorporate diverse people and cultures into the structures, processes and functions of daily community life.
- **Equitable** – inclusive communities make sure that everyone has the means to live in decent conditions (i.e., income supports, employment, good housing) and the opportunity to develop one's capacities and to participate actively in community life.
- **Accessible and Sensitive** – inclusive communities have an array of readily available and accessible supports and services for the social, health and developmental needs of their populations and provide such supports in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways (essential services identified include good schools, recreation, childcare, libraries, public transit, affordable housing and supportive housing, home care, crisis and emergency supports, well coordinated and comprehensive settlement services).

- **Participatory** – inclusive communities encourage and support the involvement of all their members in the planning and decision making that affect community conditions and development, including having an effective voice with senior levels of government.

- **Safe** – inclusive communities ensure both individual and broad community safety and security so that no on feels at risk in their homes or while moving around the neighborhood and city.

This list has been adapted from "Building Inclusive Communities: Cross Canada Perspectives and Strategies," prepared for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Laidlaw Foundation. The full report can be downloaded from the Community Development Halton website (http://www.cdhalton.ca/).

How to be an Effective Committee

In this section you will find information to help committee members as individuals and as a team to be an effective Accessibility Advisory Committee.

This section of the module is divided into the following areas:

- Teamwork
- The role of chair (including chairing meetings, leadership styles, facilitation techniques)
- Working with your municipality and the community (workshops and other ideas for introducing your community to accessibility issues, consensus building ideas, and working with the media)
- Accessible meetings (finding the right location, making the meeting accessible)

Teamwork

Working effectively as a team takes work, practice and a few ground rules. Here are some ideas from the Town of Ajax.

Ajax has established the following ground rules and principles to help their AAC work as a team:

1. The committee draws on the rich and diverse experiences of their members, and allows all to participate equally.
2. The committee recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every meeting participant.
3. The committee gives adequate consideration to participation for individuals with disabilities.
4. Committee members maintain a high level of mutual respect, inclusiveness and professionalism in its meetings.
5. The committee is conscious and respectful of its roles and responsibilities, and the various roles and responsibilities of participants.
6. The committee ensures attending members of the public are adequately and appropriately engaged during meetings.
7. The committee employs an efficient approach to time and resource management.

Task and Maintenance Functions of a Group

Groups and group members have different functions as they work together to achieve common goals. These functions can be categorized into two: task and maintenance. The effectiveness of any group depends on the leadership ability to balance between task and maintenance functions. Keep in mind, there doesn't have to be a designated leader. Your committee can demonstrate leadership as a team.

Task Functions

- Initiating activity – proposing solutions, suggesting new ideas, new definitions of the problems and new attacks on problems or new organization of material.
- Information seeking – asking for clarification of suggestions, requesting additional information on facts.
- Information giving – offering facts or generalizations, relating one's own experience to group problems to illustrate points.
- Opinion giving – stating an opinion of belief concerning a suggestion or one of several suggestions, particularly concerning its value rather than its factual basis.
- Elaborating – clarifying, giving examples of developing meanings, trying to envisage how a proposal might work if adopted.
- Co-ordinating – clarifying relationships among various ideas or suggestions, trying to pull ideas and suggestions together or trying to draw together activities of various sub-groups or members.
- Summarizing – pulling together related ideas or suggestions, restating suggestions after the group has discussed them.
- Testing feasibility – applying suggestions to real situations, examining practicality and workability of ideas, pre-evaluating decisions.
- Checking standards – submitting group decisions or accomplishments for comparison with group standards, measuring accomplishments against goals.
- Diagnosing – determining sources of difficulties, appropriate steps to take next, the main blocks of progress.

Maintenance Functions

- Encouraging – being friendly, warm, responsive to others, praising others and their ideas, agreeing with them and accepting contributions of others.
- Gate-keeping – trying to make it possible for all members to make contributions to the group by saying things like " We haven't heard anything from John yet."
- Standard setting – expressing standards for the group to use in choosing its content or procedures or in evaluating its decisions, reminding the group to avoid decisions which conflict with group standards.
- Following – going along with the decisions of the group, somewhat passively accepting the ideas of others, serving as audience during group discussion and decision-making.
- Expressing group feeling – summarizing the group atmosphere, describing reactions of the group to ideas or solutions.
- Consensus testing – tentatively asking for group opinions in order to find out if the group is nearing consensus or a decision, sending up trial balloons to test compromise solutions.
- Harmonizing – mediating, conciliating differences in points of view, making compromise solutions.
- Tension reducing – draining off negative feelings by jesting or putting a tense situation into a wider context.

Participatory versus Conventional Groups[*]

The following chart explains the difference between a participatory and a conventional group. Obviously, there are many groups that fall in between the two.

Participatory Groups	Conventional Groups
Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.	The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get more "air" time.
People give each other room to think and get their thoughts all the way out.	People interrupt each other on a regular basis.
Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist in the room.	Differences of opinion are treated as conflict that must either be stifled or 'solved'.
People draw each other out with supportive questions. "Is this what you mean?"	Questions are often perceived as challenges, as if the person being questioned has done something wrong.
Each member makes the effort to pay attention to the person speaking.	Unless the speaker captivates their attention, people space out, doodle, or check the clock.
People are able to listen to each other's ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard.	People have difficulty listening to each other's ideas because they're rehearsing what they want to say.
Each member speaks up on matters of controversy. Everyone knows where everyone stands.	Some members remain quiet on controversial matters. No one really knows where everyone stands.

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[*] Source: Adapted from Kaner, S. (1996). "Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making".

Participatory Groups	Conventional Groups
Members can accurately represent each other's points of view – even when they don't agree with them.	People rarely give accurate representations of the opinions and reasoning of those whose opinions are at odds with their own.
People refrain from talking behind each other's backs.	Because they don't feel they have permission to be direct during the meeting, people talk behind each other's back outside the meeting.
Even in the face of opposition from the persons in charge, people are encouraged to stand up for their beliefs.	People with discordant, minority perspectives are commonly discouraged from speaking out.
A problem is not considered solved until everyone who will be affected by the solution understands the reasoning.	A problem is considered solved as soon as the fastest thinkers have reached an answer. Everyone also is then expected to "get on board" regardless of whether all members understand the logic of the decision.
When people make an agreement, it is assumed that their decision still reflects a wide range of perspectives.	When people make an agreement, it is assumed that they are all thinking the exact same thing.

Assessing Your AAC "Team"[*]

Objective

The purpose of the following questionnaire is to identify what stage of the "teamwork model" your AAC team is presently working under. This teamwork model was developed in 1965 by Bruce Tuckman. It is based on a simple four-stage model of team development. This model has become an accepted part of thinking about how teams develop. Each of the four stages are now described:

1. Forming – team members are introduced.
2. Storming – the team transitions from "as is" to "to be." This stage is recognized as the most difficult.
3. Norming – the team reaches consensus on the "to be" process.
4. Performing – the team has settled its relationships and expectations.

To be successful over the long term, your AAC should identify which stage they are in. With experience, your AAC will be able to manage transitions between the different stages more easily.

Directions

The following questionnaire contains statements about teamwork. Next to each question, indicate how rarely or how often your AAC team displays each behaviour, by using the following scoring system:

Almost never	1 point
Seldom	2 points
Occasionally	3 points
Frequently	4 points
Almost always	5 points

---

[*] Source: Questionnaire adapted with permission from D. Clark 2004. This questionnaire is presented as a training tool only, and it has not been formally checked for reliability or validity.

Questions

1. ______ We try to have set procedures or protocols to ensure that things are orderly and run smoothly (e.g., minimize interruptions, everyone gets the opportunity to have their say).

2. ______ We are quick to get on with the task at hand and do not spend too much time in the planning stage.

3. ______ Our team feels that we are all in it together and shares responsibilities for the team's success or failure.

4. ______ We have thorough procedures for agreeing on our objectives and planning the way we will perform our tasks.

5. ______ Team members are afraid to ask others for help.

6. ______ We take our team's goals and objectives literally and assume a shared understanding.

7. ______ The team leader tries to keep order and contributes to the task at hand.

8. ______ We do not have fixed procedures, we make them up as the task or project progresses.

9. ______ We generate lots of ideas, but we do not use many because we fail to listen to them and reject them without fully understanding them.

10. ______ Team members do not fully trust the other members and closely monitor others who are working on a specific task.

11. ______ The team leader ensures that we follow the procedures, do not argue, do not interrupt and keep to the point.

12. ______ We enjoy working together; we have a fun and productive time.

13. ______ We have accepted each other as members of the team.

14. ______ The team leader is democratic and collaborative.

15. ______ We are trying to define the goal and what tasks need to be accomplished.

Questions (cont'd)

16. _____ Many of the team members have their own ideas about the process and personal agendas are rampant.

17. _____ We fully accept each other's strengths and weakness.

18. _____ We assign specific roles to team members (e.g., team leader, facilitator, time keeper, note taker, etc.).

19. _____ We try to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.

20. _____ The tasks are very different from what we imagined and seem very difficult to accomplish.

21. _____ There are many abstract discussions of the concepts and issues, some members are impatient with these discussions.

22. _____ We are able to work through group problems.

23. _____ We argue a lot even though we agree on the real issues.

24. _____ The team is often tempted to go above the original scope of the project.

25. _____ We express criticism of others constructively.

26. _____ There is a close attachment to the team.

27. _____ It seems as if little is being accomplished with the project's goals.

28. _____ The goals we have established seem unrealistic.

29. _____ Although we are not fully sure of the project's goals and issues, we are excited and proud to be on the team.

30. _____ We often share personal problems with each other.

31. _____ There is a lot of resistance toward the tasks at hand and quality improvement approaches.

32. _____ We get a lot of work done.

In the lines below, mark the score of each item on the questionnaire. For example, if you scored item one with a three (Occasionally), then enter a three next to Item One. When you have entered all the scores for each question, total each of the four columns at the bottom.

Item	**Score**	**Item**	**Score**	**Item**	**Score**	**Item**	**Score**
1.	________	2.	________	4.	________	3.	________
5.	________	7.	________	6.	________	8.	________
10.	________	9.	________	11.	________	12.	________
15.	________	16.	________	13.	________	14.	________
18.	________	20.	________	19.	________	17.	________
21.	________	23.	________	24.	________	22.	________
27.	________	28.	________	25.	________	26.	________
29.	________	31.	________	30.	________	32.	________
TOTAL	_____	**TOTAL**	_____	**TOTAL**	_____	**TOTAL**	_____
Forming Stage		**Storming Stage**		**Norming Stage**		**Performing Stage**	

The lowest possible score for a stage is eight (Almost never), while the highest possible score for a stage is 40 (Almost always).

The highest of the four scores indicates which stage you perceive your team to normally operate in. If your highest score is 32 or more, it is a strong indicator of the stage your team is in.

The lowest of the three scores is an indicator of the stage your team is least like. If your lowest score is 16 or less, it is a strong indicator that your team does not operate this way.

If two of the scores are close to the same, you are probably going through a transition phase, except:

- If you score high in both the Forming and Storming Phases, then you are in the Storming Phase.
- If you score high in both the Norming and Performing Phases, then you are in the Performing Stage.

If there is only a small difference between three or four scores, then this indicates that you have no clear perception of the way your team operates, or the team's performance is highly variable, or that you are in the storming phase (this phase can be extremely volatile with high and low points).

The Role of Chair

Chairing a Meeting

The role of chair can be difficult, as Henry Roberts found out when he was asked to chair a meeting and realized he didn't know how. He turned to parliamentary laws to guide him and discovered that every part of the United States had a different idea on correct parliamentary procedure so he decided to write the "Robert's Rules of Order." The first edition was printed in 1876 and there have many more since.

Here is a simplified version of Robert's Rules of Order, adapted from the website of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa.

1. The chairperson of a meeting shall be privileged to debate on all subjects under discussion, on temporarily turning over the chair to the vice-chair or other member of the committee during such debate and subsequent voting.

2. An appeal may, in all cases, be made from any decision of the chairperson. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present shall be necessary to sustain the appeal.

3. Any member making an appeal from a decision of the chair may state his or her reasons for doing so. The chair may then give his or her reasons for his or her decision before the question is put to a vote. When the vote has been taken, the matter shall be considered as settled.

4. When two or more members rise at the same time, the chairperson shall name the one to speak.

5. When a member is called to order by the chairperson or any member, that person shall at once take his or her seat and every question of order shall be decided by the chair without debate, subject to the Rule of Order Number Two.

6. No motion shall be debated until seconded.

7. Appeals and motions to reconsider or adjourn are not debatable.

8. When a question is under debate, no motion shall be received except to lay on the table, to postpone, to commit to a committee, or to amend.

9. No person shall interrupt another while speaking, except in accordance with the Rule of Order Number Five.

10. A motion to adjourn shall always be in order, except when another motion is before the meeting.

11. When a motion is made and seconded, the mover thereof may be called upon by the chairperson to reduce the same to writing and to hand it to the chair, from which it shall be read before the meeting for debate.

12. Any mover of a motion shall be at liberty to accept an amendment thereto; but if the amendment is not accepted by the mover, yet duly seconded, a vote shall be taken on the amendment prior to voting on the original motion.

13. Every officer, on leaving his or her office, shall give to his or her successor all papers, books, documents, and money belonging to the association.

14. The chairperson, at any meeting, may limit the time of any speaker on any motion or discussion.

15. A Rule of Order may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any meeting, but the suspension shall apply only for that meeting.

TIP: The 4Ps to an Effective Meeting

Purpose: Be clear what your meeting will focus on and the results. Design accordingly.

Preparation: Is everyone aware, is the agenda prepared, is accommodation in place, has accessibility been checked, are the reports/information gathered?

Process: Strike a balance between getting through the 'business' and paying attention to the needs and relationships between people.

Practical Action: Are follow up actions assigned and deadlines given? Is a meeting evaluation required?

AAC Chairperson Roles

The Town of Ajax has summarized the following roles for their AAC chairperson:

1. With the help of municipal staff, determine any special meeting provisions. Determine quorum and call the meeting to order.

2. Identify agenda items. Gauge discussion among members and ensure adequate consideration has been given to each item. Chairpersons generally offer their guidance and ask questions without taking a specific position on a matter.

3. Keep a record and determine speaking order and ensure all members have had an opportunity to provide their input. Ensure any members of staff or the public has an opportunity to comment, where appropriate.

4. Facilitate consideration of main motions, ensuring there are seconders.

5. Rule on procedures with the assistance of staff, as appropriate.

6. Ensure items are dispensed with in a timely and fair manner.

7. Facilitate decorum and appropriate behaviour.

8. Ensure all matters of the committee's business are considered in the work plan.

9. Represent the committee at a yearly presentation to council.

Different Styles of Leadership*

There are five common styles of leadership styles that can be arranged in a spectrum of style, with participatory at the top and directive at the bottom.

- **Participatory** – Leaders interact with other members as peers to see what they can discover and create together. In the participatory mode, everyone on the committee leads according to their competence, insight, experience, or passion in ways that others can and do honour and follow.
- **Facilitative** – Leaders see the self-organizing energy of the committee being blocked by missing information, resources, know-how, and process etc., or by confusion. The leaders deal with this problem in whatever way will best enhance and sustain the self-organizing energy of the committee as a whole.
- **Evocative** – Leaders try to draw out the potential capabilities of the committee members with questions, observational feedback, visions of possibilities, modeling an exploratory attitude, etc. Any directiveness here is unattached to particular outcomes. It simply directs people's attention in a way calculated to trigger a response, which is then free to go where it will as the committee organizes itself.
- **Provocative** – Sometimes when self-organizing energy is not forthcoming, leaders can use a provocative style to push the system so that it pushes back with its own self-determined energy. Or, the leader may 'harass' the group about obstacles or problems in a way that provokes them to action. Sometimes such provocative response interactions unfold spontaneously and unintentionally. At other times a leader plans them to provide enlivening challenge.
- **Directive** – In the directive style, leaders look more like traditional leaders, actively generating the structures, activities, attitudes, conditions, and lessons etc., as they see necessary. If they are in charge, they may mandate such changes. Other directive strategies include demanding, urging, advising, training, suggesting and explicitly modeling desirable behaviors.

The least extreme form of directiveness is a management style that obtains lots of input before, during and after issuing directives. The most extreme form of directiveness is domination, which may be problematic for some.

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* Source: Adapted from the Co-Intelligence Unit website, available online at: www.co-intelligence.org.

Working with Your Municipality, Your Community and the Media

In your work as a committee and as members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, you will be involved in working with a variety of other groups and individuals. Here are some ideas about facilitating a meeting, consensus building, running a training /education workshop and working with the media.

Some Facilitation Techniques*

Stay neutral on content – Focus on the process roles and avoid the temptation of offering opinions about the topic under discussion. Use questions and suggestions to offer ideas that spring to mind. Never impose opinions on the group.

Listen actively – Look people in the eye or speak in their direction. Use attentive body language and paraphrase what they are saying. Use eye contact or other agreed upon signals to let people know they can speak next, and to prompt the quiet ones to participate.

Ask questions – This is the most important tool. Questions test assumptions, invite participation, gather information and probe for hidden points. Effective questioning allows you to delve past the symptoms to get at the causes.

Paraphrase to clarify – This involves repeating what people say to make sure they know they are being heard, to let others hear their points a second time and to clarify key ideas.

Synthesize ideas – Get people to comment and build on each other's thoughts to ensure that any ideas that are recorded (e.g., on a flip chart) reflect the collective thinking. This builds consensus and commitment.

Stay on track – Set time guidelines for each discussion. Appoint a timekeeper or use a timer and call out milestones. Point out when the discussion has veered off topic. 'Park' off topic comments and suggestions (see park it, below).

Give and receive feedback – Periodically 'hold a mirror' to help the group see itself so that it can make corrections. For example, "Only two people are engaged in this discussion, while three people are reading. What's this telling us that we need to do? Also, ask for and accept feedback about the facilitation, e.g., "are we making progress?" or "How's the pace?"

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* Source: Adapted from Volunteer Canada's "Facilitated Discussions: A Volunteer Management Workbook" (No Date). Available online at: www.volunteer.ca.

Test assumptions – Bring any assumptions people are operating under out into the open and clarify them, so that they are clearly understood by everyone. These assumptions may even need to be challenged. For example: "On what basis are you making the comment that …"

Collect ideas – Keep track of both emerging ideas and final decisions. Make clear and accurate summaries on a flip chart so everyone can see (remember to read them out from time to time for the sake of people who are blind or have low vision). Notes should be brief and concise. They must reflect what was said, not your interpretation of what was said.

Summarize clearly – Listen attentively to everything that is said and then offer concise and timely summaries. Summarize when you want to revive a discussion that has ground to a halt, or to end a discussion when things seem to have been fully discussed.

Label sidetracks – The facilitator is responsible to let group members know when they're off track. They can then decide to pursue the sidetrack or stop their current discussion and get back to the agenda.

Park it – At every meeting, tape a flip chart sheet to a wall to record all side track items. Later these items can be reviewed for inclusion in a future agenda.

Use the spell-check button – Relax everyone by drawing a spell check button at the top right corner of every flip chart. Tell participants they can spell creatively since pressing the spell check button automatically eliminates all errors.

More information related to facilitation techniques and guidance applicable to AACs can be found online at the Leisure Information Network's website, in the "Facilitator's Handbook: Working with Volunteer Boards."
(http://www.lin.ca/lin/resource/html/al058%5B0%5D.htm)

Consensus Building Approaches

As previously discussed in Module 4, a consensus process aims at bringing a group to mutual agreement by addressing all concerns. Here is a sample outline of a “consensus building” approach for AAC discussions:

1. A presenter states the proposal. Ideally, a written draft has been distributed prior to the meeting.
2. The group discusses and clarifies the proposal. No one presents concerns until clarification is complete.
3. The facilitator asks for legitimate concerns. If there are none the facilitator asks the group if it has reached consensus. If there are concerns, the recorder lists concerns where everyone can see them. The group then tries to resolve the concerns. The presenter has first option to:
    - Clarify the proposal
    - Change the proposal
    - Explain why it is not in conflict with the group's values
    - Ask those with concerns to stand aside.

4. By "standing aside" a person indicates a willingness to live with a proposal. By "crossing off a concern" a person indicates satisfaction with clarifications or changes.

5. If concerns remain unresolved and concerned members are unwilling to stand aside, the facilitator asks everyone to examine these concerns in relation to the group's purpose and values. The group may need to go through a special session to examine its purpose or resolve value conflicts.

6. The facilitator checks again to see if those with concerns are willing to stand aside or cross off their concerns. If not, the facilitator keeps asking for suggestions to resolve the concerns, until everyone finds the proposal acceptable or stands aside. Often the solution is a "third way," something between either/or, black and white.

7. If time runs out and concerns persist, the facilitator may:
    - Conduct a straw poll
    - Ask those with concerns if they will stand aside
    - Ask the presenter to withdraw the proposal
    - Contract with the group for more time
    - Send the proposal to a sub-group
    - Conduct a vote, requiring a 75% to 90% majority

At the end, the facilitator states the outcome clearly. For consensus to work properly everyone must understand the meaning of "legitimate concerns." They are possible consequences of the proposal that might adversely affect the organization or the common good, or that are in conflict with the purpose or values of the group.

Consensus will not work properly if concerns come from ego or vested interests, or derive from unstated tensions around authority, rights, personality conflicts, competition or lack of trust. Trust is a prerequisite for consensus.

If your group adopts consensus as a decision-making method you do not have to use consensus of the whole group to decide everything. You can (and should) empower individuals, committees, or task forces to make certain decisions.

Advantages of Consensus Building Approaches*

The potential advantages of consensus building approaches include:

- Better decisions. As cross-disability groups learn about each others' views and needs, and develop common ground for action, they can create solutions that better reflect the concerns of other parties as well as their own.

- Faster implementation. Participants are less likely to block implementation if they understand that a plan or policy reflects their input and has been crafted to meet their basic interests. Participants involved in consensus building often make commitments to assist in the implementation process.

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* Source: Adapted from Jones, R. "Consensus Building Tools for New Challenges at the State and Local Levels" (No Date). Available online at: www.policyconsensus.org.

- Bridge community differences. Consensus building processes allow communities and the affected interests to bridge differences and work together to find mutually acceptable solutions based on common interests.

- Educate participants. Consensus building processes can educate participants on the complex nature of the problems and issues and on others' concerns that will need to be addressed in solutions.

- Deal productively with shared power for decision-making. Consensus building processes bring a wide array of stakeholders to the table to seek mutually beneficial solutions as a response to the reality that power has become widely and thinly distributed with many interests able to block or veto the possibility of action.

- Create new resources. There are fewer financial resources at the local level available to deal with critical issues facing our society. Consensus building processes can engage a range of public, private and community stakeholders and leadership to bring a wider array of resources to address issues and problems.

- Manage diversity and build common ground. Consensus building processes can help increasingly diverse communities improve inter-group relations, build trust and find common ground.

- Inter-departmental collaboration. Consensus building can effectively involve different municipal departments and representatives of community organizations in building a collaborative agreement on issues that have impacts beyond the municipal 'jurisdiction' or responsibility.

Collaborative Problem Solving

Consider using the following checklist to determine how well your AAC members collaborate to solve problems and address issues.

Understanding Interests	
☐	Identify and communicate your interests.
☐	Listen to hear and understand others' perspectives.
Brainstorming Options	
☐	Develop an effective brainstorming question.
☐	Create a comfortable atmosphere.
☐	Brainstorm creatively.
☐	Promote inclusive participation.
☐	Record generated options.
☐	Finish brainstorming before evaluating options.

	Evaluating Options
☐	Assess the merits and disadvantages of each option from everyone's perspective.
☐	Express concerns productively.
☐	Take into account everyone's perspectives.
☐	Reframe antagonistic or inflammatory remarks.
☐	Validate emotions.
☐	If you have difficulties identifying a good solution, use other tactics.
	Agreeing On A Solution
☐	Choose the best possible solution.
☐	Review details for clarity.

Source: **BCS, Inc.** (http://www.bcsolutions.org/tips.html)

Additional Resources to Help Your AAC

The following resources cover a range of topics related to accessibility planning to provide you with additional guidance. Topics range from advocacy and developing training programs, to sample accessibility "checklists" and audit tools for evaluating accessibility. Click on the links below to jump to each section:

More About The Advisory vs. Advocacy Role

For more information and guidance related to advocacy, check out the following Internet resources:

- The Disabled Women's Network Ontario Advocacy Toolkit (http://dawn.thot.net/advocacy_toolkit.html)
- The Community Toolbox's Advocate for Change website (http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/advocateforchange/index.jsp)
- The Vancouver Citizens Committee's The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Community (http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/)

Understanding Attitudinal Barriers

Most people with disabilities agree that the greatest obstacle they face is attitudinal barriers. These are barriers resulting from social stereotypes and the misconceptions of others about persons with disabilities. Many people, when meeting someone who appears to be "different," feel awkward and react in ways that are not their "normal" reactions. There is no "normal" when we all stop and think about how everyone is different and unique in their own way. Sometimes people rely on stereotypes or generalizations about people with disabilities that are not based in reality. Common stereotypes include[*]:

Condescension: People sometimes talk down to someone with a disability, as if that person cannot understand "normal" conversation, or is a child. This is especially true when speaking with a person with a communication disorder, such as speech impairment. A person with a physical disability does not necessarily have a mental disability. Speak to people with disabilities in word and tone that is appropriate to their physical age.

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[*] Source: Adapted from Lowery, H. (1999). An Activity Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities. Corporation for National Service.

Discrimination: Discrimination appears most often when funds are needed to create architectural access or new programs for persons with disabilities. The argument is "...why should so much be spent for so few?" The fact remains that the numbers are not so few. Discrimination also occurs when people don't want to be around other people who look or act "different" because people do not always know how to behave around those who appear "different."

Discomfort: Disabilities are an uncomfortable reminder that all people are vulnerable to accidents, illness and aging. People do not like to think about disabilities and how having a disability can change lives. Because it is not a part of a person's experience, they can't imagine how they would cope.

Fear: People fear the unknown and are afraid they will say or do the wrong thing. It seems easier to ignore or avoid a person with a disability. Research studies have shown that most people show anxiety symptoms when meeting a person with a disability.

Invisibility: Sometimes people are more comfortable pretending not to see a person with a disability because then there is no need to interact.

Oversensitivity: When meeting a person with a disability, how often is it that only the disability is seen? People tend to focus on the wheelchair, the scarred face, the missing arm or the seeing-eye dog, not on the person. There is also the inclination to become very aware of the words used such as "Do you see what I mean?" or "Let's walk over there." Remember, both people with or without a disability use the same terms and there is no need to be overly concerned or too careful – just be yourself!

Nuisance: People see people with disabilities as a "nuisance" when the need to make small efforts to accommodate a person is viewed as costly in effort, money and time.

Preconceived ideas: Many people may assume a person with a staggering walk or slurred speech is abusing drugs or alcohol. In fact, that person may have had a stroke or a head injury that can cause slurred speech and an uncertain gait. Or, it may be assumed a person with other disabilities may have hearing problems or reduced intellectual ability.

Spread effect: The tendency to assume a person with one disability has many. For example, assuming that a person in a wheelchair cannot hear or has an intellectual disability.

Special, courageous and inspirational: Another common stereotype about people with disabilities is that they are special, courageous and inspirational. People with disabilities live normal lives and do not want to be regarded as amazing in any way. People with disabilities would like to be seen as people.

These examples show that there is an important role for both AAC members and municipal staff to work together and find ways to remove common attitudinal barriers. Raising awareness, developing educational and training strategies and/or programs are some examples of ways to do this.

Simulation exercises that are designed for both people with and without disabilities, as participants, can be an effective strategy to educate others about different issues, circumstances and needs of people with disabilities. However, there are some people who disagree with simulation exercises being the most effective way to do this. In general, if designed properly and if it is acknowledged from the beginning that the focus is on 'simulation' only, such exercises can be an effective strategy and tool. Your AAC needs to decide if these types of awareness exercises are suitable for your municipality to help achieve goals related to removing and preventing attitudinal barriers.

Training and Education Resources

*Training Design Checklist**

This training design checklist is provided for AAC members or municipal staff (e.g., ODA Coordinators) who are considering developing formal disability training programs or exercises. For example, when new councillors are elected to represent your municipality, often they require orientation related to performing their duties and responsibilities, including working on accessibility planning issues and understanding the requirements of the ODA. This may be an ideal opportunity to incorporate accessibility planning and disability awareness issues into council orientation and training sessions that often occur at the local level.

This checklist is intended as a general guideline only, as there are endless variations on approaches to providing training that could be used. It is important for training activities to follow all accessibility guidelines discussed in this handbook, including addressing access issues related to communications and meeting accessibility. These guidelines were prepared in an effort to build the capacity of municipal staff and encourage the use of existing resources where possible. However, there may be additional opportunities for your municipality or AAC to involve formal trainers and the use of community organizations providing these services.

When developing a training workshop or "module," consider the following:

Opening

- Have you included a statement of objectives in the opening?
- Do you have an icebreaker that relates to the training topic?
- Is the length of the icebreaker appropriate for the length of the training (longer training can support a longer icebreaker)?

Objectives

- Have you identified specific and measurable objectives for each section of the training program?
- Is each objective addressed in the content for that section?

Content

- Is there a clear link between each piece of content and at least one training objective?
- Is the time realistic for complex content areas?
- Is the content appropriate and at the right level of detail for the target audience?
- Is there a transition from one piece of content to another explaining how the two are related?

Methods

- Have you avoided more than 10 minutes of lecture in a row?
- Have you avoided more than 15 minutes of lecture and/or group discussion in a row?
- Have you avoided repetitive training methods (e.g., lecture, paired exercise, lecture, paired exercise, lecture, paired exercise)?
- Do your methods include individual, paired, small group and large group activities?
- Is there a lively activity within the first hour after lunch?
- Do you have methods that reach a variety of learning styles?

Timing

- Have you estimated time for each piece of content, rather than for a complete section?
- Are times realistic for each piece of content?
- When estimating time for an activity, did you include the time it takes to explain and debrief the activity?
- Did you include time to answer questions in each section?
- Are time estimates realistic based on the size of the group you anticipate?

Resources and Support Materials

- Do you have reference materials for any complex or new content areas?
- Do you have visual support for any key messages or content?
- Are you using flip charts for content you want to reference repeatedly in the training? Have all users' needs been considered?
- Are you using slides for content you will address for just a short time?
- If you are using written instructions for any activities, are alternate formats provided?

Closing

- Have you included a summary of learning in the closing?
- Does the closing include an action plan or some type of activity to drive application of training?

Training Workshops or Programs

The following template is provided for AACs or municipal staff as a guide for designing accessibility workshops or programs. It is intended to provide an outline and starting point only and it can be adapted to suit your needs.

Design Template[*]

Module: Introduction **30 minutes**

Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- *Learn about different disability "types"* (EXAMPLE ONLY)
- *Insert another objective here*
- *Insert Here*

Method/Activity	Content Description	Support Materials	Est. Time
Lecture	Introduce instructors, interpreters and participants.		5-10 min.
Lecture	Explain objectives and expected results of module. Describe how it relates to competencies to be developed.	Slides Workbook page1	5 min.
Discussion	Ask trainee(s) to share their personal objectives for the training and their current knowledge of the subject. Post objectives on flip chart.	Flip chart	5-10 min.
tbd	Conduct icebreaker (optional)	tbd	tbd

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[*] Source: Checklist components adapted and reproduced for use in this Handbook with permission of Results Through Training.

Topic: Understanding Disability (EXAMPLE ONLY) **90 minutes**

Objectives:

- *To gain a greater awareness of 'cross-disability' issues*
- *Insert Here*
- *Insert Here*

Method/Activity	Content Description	Support Materials	Est. Time
Lecture	Discuss overview of simulation exercises and safety issues, etiquette, etc.	Slides	30 min.
Simulation Exercise	A series of simulation exercises will be conducted to demonstrate how barriers affect different disability types.	Wheelchair, other assistive devices.	1 hour

Topic: *[Insert Topic Name Here]* **(total time)**

Objectives:

- Insert Here
- Insert Here
- Insert Here

Method/Activity	Content Description	Support Materials	Est. Time

Topic: Conclusion **25 minut**

Objectives:

- *To summarize issues and topics learned.*
- *Insert Here*
- *Insert Here*

Method/Activity	Content Description	Support Materials	Est. Time
Discussion	Ask trainee(s) to share what they learned that will address the objectives they identified at the beginning of the module.	Flip: Personal Objectives	5-10 min.
Individual Exercise	Have trainee(s) develop an action plan for applying the information from the module to the field	Action Plan Handout	10 min.
Individual Exercise	Complete session evaluation.	Session Evaluation	5 min.

Some Possible Methods/Activities

Lecture
Large Group Discussion
Small Group Exercise
Team Exercise
Trio Exercise
Paired Discussion
Case Study
Role Play
Game
Test
Individual Planning Exercise
Simulation
Guided Imagery
Large Group Exercise
Skill Practice
Demonstration
Videotape
Audiotape
Webcast
Captioning / Interpretation

Possible Support Materials

Assistive / Adaptive Devices
Slides / Overhead
Flip Chart
Workbook/Training Manual
Handout
Job Aid
Action Plan
Skill Planner
Skill Assessment
Toys
Session Evaluation
Test
Videotape
Audiotape
Video Camera
Post-it® Notes
3x5 Cards
Diskette
Posters
Prework

Sample Design Checklist

- Is meeting space accessible? Do all participants know where accessible washrooms are located?
- Are sign language interpreters provided or available upon request?
- Are support materials and information available in alternate formats (e.g., by requesting in advance)?
- Do you have a variety of activities/methods throughout the design?
- Is lecture limited to no more than 20 minutes at a time?
- Do you have a method for measuring how well objectives are met in each section?
- Have you identified the support materials needed for each activity (e.g., adaptive/assistive equipment)?
- Does your content and activities reflect the objectives for a given section?
- Are all objectives addressed in some activity?
- Are time estimates realistic for the size of group that you anticipate?
- Does your plan include an activity around application to the job?
- Are content descriptions detailed enough to communicate the overall goal and structure of an activity?

Remember – Ensure your training and workshop activities are inclusive and check that all your pre-planning activities address the accessibility needs of all participants.

For more information on training, visit the Accessibility Directorate's website for the following resources:

- Planning for Accessible Meetings (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessiblemeetings.htm)
- Guide to Multiple Formats for Communications (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/multipleformats.htm)
- ODA Train-the-Trainer Program: A Tool to Help Organizations with Accessibility Planning (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/)

Sensitivity and Awareness Workshops

The following is a small sample of the types of sensitivity and awareness workshops your AAC or municipality may consider to address accessibility issues in your community. There are many organizations throughout Ontario that provide these services and your AAC should consider establishing partnerships with such community groups and organizations.

Ontario March of Dimes

Workshops
- one-half day to two days duration
- on-site or at client's location
- up to 20–25 people per session

Sample of Resources Used
- CSA Guidelines – Barrier Free Design
- Greater Toronto Hotel Association's / Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's "Guest Services that Work for Everyone," available online at: www.gtha.com.
- Customer Service Standards for Seniors

Sample Agenda
- Overview
- Demographics
- Disability Legislation
- Using Suitable Language
- General Discussion of Barriers
- Personal Background and Experiences
- Awareness Exercises
- Use of Assistive Devices

Contact Information

Ontario March of Dimes, Rehabilitation & Corporate Services
Provincial Sales & Marketing Manager
10 Overlea Boulevard, Toronto, Ontario M4H 1A4
Tel: 416-425-3463 x300 or 1-800-263-3463 x300
Fax: 416-425-1920
Internet: www.dimes.on.ca

Coalition for Persons with Disabilities - Peel/Halton/Dufferin Regions

Workshop
- “Reach out Beyond Appearances”
- three hours duration to a full day
- 30 to 40 people per session

Sample Resources
- Sensitivity/Awareness Workshop Reference Manual
- Government Publications

Sample Agenda
- Introductions: Facilitators – Qualifications, Personal Experiences. General Principles, Background, Accommodating in the Workplace.
- What is the Coalition?
- Objective of the Workshop – Reality Check – What are participant's Objectives?
- Sensitivity Activity – What are participants sensitive about? Identify one by the label of identity.
- Feeling Activity – How they felt about the first time they met someone with a disability? Lack of respect if seen as the sensitivity
- Give it up activity – Give away one card, second card without a choice, most important of the three, take it away.
- Experiential exercises
- Types of disabilities
- Review of barriers
- Video
- Quiz: “Celebrities with Disabilities” and “Check your Knowledge”
- Question period
- Workshop evaluation

Contact Information

Coalition for Persons with Disabilities – Peel/Halton/Dufferin
Phone: 905-569-2225 or 1-800-270-3861
E-mail: coalition.pwd@sympatico.ca
Internet: www.disabilityaccess.org

Working with the Media

The media is usually the key resource to use for informing the public about an issue or problem in your municipality. The following advice is adapted from the work of the Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB) and the information found in their "Advocacy Manual." This information may be useful for municipal AAC members who have to work with their municipalities in discussing projects and initiatives with local media. Sometimes people are fearful of the media because they worry that the facts wili get distorted or the story will leave the wrong impression. While that may happen, the advantages of media coverage of an issue are significant and can assist your AAC with raising awareness of accessibility issues in your community.

Your Role as an Advocate

Journalists may become interested in the situation of people with disabilities because:

- The person with a disability tells them about it
- They hear about the situation and want more information, or
- If your municipality sends out a media release to invite media attention.

Whatever brings journalists to the story, their interest offers people with disabilities an opportunity to let other people know about the problem and gather public support for its resolution.

In smaller communities, it is fairly easy to get to know the people who cover the news. The same journalists may cover the majority of community events. Don't be shy to talk to journalists and help them get information for their stories. Like any other relationship, trust develops over time. Journalists appreciate people who return their calls promptly – they often work to a tight deadline – and people who provide them with accurate, reliable information. They are always looking for stories.

In larger communities, it may be harder to get to know all the journalists who cover community events. However, some journalists have a "beat," such as city council or disability issues. Even if you have not met journalists before, you can learn a bit about them ahead of time by following their coverage of local events.

If you think the situation of people with disabilities may benefit from media coverage or if you expect that the media will be at an event at which people with disabilities and their issues and experiences will be discussed, for instance, a city council meeting, be prepared.

Best Practice TIP #1

If you are an AAC member or volunteer that also represents a community organization, always check with your supervisor before contacting the media. Know and follow your organization's media policy!

Unless there are issues of privacy or safety, it is best if people with disabilities speak for themselves. Municipal staff can assist AAC members with the advance preparation needed when talking to journalists (e.g., 'briefing' of the issues to be discussed, approaches, examples, etc.) and by providing journalists with background information as required.

Best Practice TIP #2

Consider choosing one of your AAC members to be responsible for "media relations" – someone who is comfortable speaking to journalists and other media. Municipal staff with experience in media relations & communications can also provide assistance and guidance to AAC media representatives.

AAC Media Checklist

- ✓ Has your AAC chosen a member to represent the AAC when speaking to the media? Do you have permission to speak to the media?
- ✓ Have you spoken to your supervisor and municipal staff liaison/coordinator about the possibility that the media will be interested in the situation/issue of the AAC and/or people with disabilities and may be covering it?
- ✓ Has your AAC talked as a group about possible media coverage? Are all members comfortable with the idea?
- ✓ Does your AAC know what key point/issue the media should report? What one sentence would your AAC like to hear on the evening news? What solution to the problem does your AAC want the media to put forward?
- ✓ Are you clear on how privacy and confidentiality policies of your municipality and/or community organization may apply?
- ✓ If available, how can your municipality's communications staff be of assistance? Can they help your AAC representative prepare to meet the media? Can they draft a media release?

For more information, see the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Public Relations Toolkit.
(http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/english/citdiv/voluntar/prkit.htm)

Accessible Meetings

Planning, organizing and conducting accessible and inclusive events should be a priority for all municipalities in order to maximize participation. The following resources are intended to provide meeting, conference and other event organizers with practical guidance to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities. Your municipality and AAC should consider how these resources can be adapted to suit your specific needs when it comes to planning community events.

The Accessibility Directorate:

- Guide for Planning for Accessible Meetings (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/accessiblemeetings.htm)
- Guide to Multiple Formats for Communications (http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility/english/multipleformats.htm).

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat:

- Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings & Conferences (http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/TB_852/gpimc-gprci_e.asp)

The Centre for Accessible Environments:

- Make Your Conference Accessible guide (http://www.cae.org.uk/pdf/venues/html-version/index.html)

The Canadian Hearing Society:

- Get Connected to Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People: A Guide for Service Providers and Businesses (http://www.chs.ca/info/access/busguide/eng1.html)

Accessibility Design Guidelines

The following resources provide technical design guidelines, standards and best practices – a variety of universal design approaches to designing, building or evaluating the built environment, including sites, trails, interior and exterior spaces, building systems and management issues, for example.

City of Guelph:
Accessibility Guidelines 2001 (Adobe pdf format)
(http://www.city.guelph.on.ca/uploaddocuments/d2305+cogaccess.pdf)
More information can be obtained by visiting the City of Guelph website
(http://www.city.guelph.on.ca/document.cfm?category=167)

City of London:
Facility Accessibility Design Standards (2001) (Adobe pdf format)
(http://www.city.london.on.ca/Planning/FADS.pdf)
More information can be obtained by visiting the City of London website
(http://www.city.london.on.ca/Planning/accessibilitystandards.htm)

City of Peterborough:
Access Guidelines 2002 (Adobe pdf format. Note: this is a very large file)
(http://www1.city.peterborough.on.ca/CITYdocs/cityofpeterboro_2/planningbuildin_/accessplan/accessplan.pdf)
More information can be obtained by visiting the City of Peterborough's website
(http://www.city.peterborough.on.ca/)

City of Toronto:
Accessibility Design Guidelines 2004 (Adobe pdf format)
(http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/pdf/accessibility_design_guidelines.pdf)
More information can be obtained by visiting the City of Toronto's Diversity Management & Community Engagement website
(http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/index.htm)

The Universal Trails Assessment Program (UTAP) of Beneficial Designs, Inc.
(http://www.beneficialdesigns.com/trails/utap.html#overview)

Planning For Accessibility:
Municipal Project Design and Site Plan Checklist

Under the ODA, municipal councils must seek the advice of an AAC on the accessibility of municipal buildings, structures or premises that the council purchases, builds or significantly renovates, leases or uses as a municipal building (for example, an arena). Many municipalities have also worked in partnership with AACs to audit existing municipal buildings for access as part of their accessibility plan activities.

Under the ODA, municipalities must also provide site plans and drawings described in Section 41 of the Planning Act that are requested by an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Once site plans and drawings are requested, municipal councils must supply these drawings in a timely manner. Section 41 only applies to specific areas designated by municipalities and does not refer to every development application. Site plans generally apply to the exterior features of a property such as curb cuts, ramps, walkways and lighting and not the interior features of buildings that are covered by the requirements of the Ontario Building Code and enforced by municipalities.

When new municipal government buildings and projects are proposed for your municipality and community, there are many questions that should be considered during both the project design and site plan review phases, including preliminary discussions with stakeholders. It is important to do this as early as possible in the design stage and prior to any formal site plan approvals to ensure accessibility issues are addressed from the very beginning and no new barriers are created.

This following outline is provided to assist with the development of a more detailed accessibility checklist that can be applied to the review of both exterior and interior features of a municipal government developments and site plans. AACs should work in collaboration with their municipal planning staff to design the features of a checklist that suits their local planning context.

Format

The questions provided are written in a way that they can be easily adapted to a "checklist" format by your municipality. Keep in mind these questions are a starting point only and the goal is to involve your AAC at the earliest stages possible in the site plan review process, while encouraging developers/builders to work with your AAC during future stages as well, addressing accessibility issues along the way.

Acknowledgement: The following Terms of Reference were adapted from the work of the City of Timmins and their AAC's "Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee Barrier Free Checklist." Your municipality may require further revisions, recognizing this information is provided as a template only.

AAC Site Plan Review Sub-committee – A Sample Terms of Reference

- To develop a 'Barrier-free Accessibility Checklist' for reviewing site-plan control applications in conjunction with the municipal Planning / Building / Development Department(s).
- To work with the Planning / Building / Development Department(s) on selected site plans for review of accessibility.
- To advise on the placement of designated accessible parking spaces in relation to the accessible entrance of the building.
- To comment on the number of designated accessible parking spaces.
- To comment on the accessibility into and within municipal buildings including the location of public transit (e.g., handi-trans) stops.

Insert Additional Terms of Reference Here

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Accessibility Considerations: Key Issues

Some of the following questions can be used to develop a comprehensive Building Accessibility Review Checklist for new municipal facilities and site plan review. These questions attempt to reflect examples of best practices and can be adapted to suit your AAC's needs.

- What does the developer/architect/designer understand by inclusive access? Have they identified what user groups they are attempting to accommodate and address the needs of?
- How will inclusive access be achieved in this project, development or building?
- What accessibility standards or additional guidelines will be used? Are the standards and guidelines used to the highest standard (e.g., beyond the Ontario Building Code)? Does your municipality encourage the use of any local accessibility guidelines or additional best practices?
- Is access to all areas provided? Will persons with disabilities be able to access all facilities of the building (interior and exterior elements) or site independently, including work areas?
- What are the existing site constraints or potential barriers and how will they be removed and/or prevented (for example, in a sloping site, or in an existing building with a small elevator shaft)? What solutions are there? What are the implications of those solutions?
- If this is a major site and large-scale development that includes a range of sub-sites and buildings, how will inclusion be guaranteed throughout the site? How will access for persons with disabilities be guaranteed to adjacent sites?
- Are considerations included to provide linkages to existing or new public transportation options?
- Does the design create any management barriers to inclusion (e.g., by installing a platform lift that can only be operated by staff)? Are there other options available?

- Has the team working on this project identified their experience with accessible design and inclusive access? Are they willing to provide your municipality with a summary report of proactive steps they will be taking?

- Does the scale or complexity of the project require using a qualified and experienced Accessibility Consultant?

- How will people with disabilities be involved in the planning and consultation process? Is there any initiative to formally involve your municipal AAC and/or a sub-committee of your AAC?

- How will the individuals responsible for the building or facility ensure that access is maintained to a high standard once the work is finished? Have they identified "check points" to inspect accessibility needs at various stages of the construction process?

Auditing Resources

A Flow Chart of Actions When Improving Existing Municipal Facilities

Consider using this flow-chart as guidance for developing an accessibility improvement strategy when auditing existing municipal facilities.

1. **Review and record current use (and non use) of the building – Consult users at the same time, asking the following questions:**

   - Do people have difficulties using the building?

   - Have opinions on accessibility been publicly expressed? (e.g., have any formal complaints been made?)

2. **Evaluate building for accessibility. Consider in advance:**

   What accessibility criteria are you using to evaluate accessibility levels? (e.g., beyond Ontario Building Code requirements, Canadian Standards Association Guidelines, municipal design guidelines, other best practice criteria, etc.)

   Are there special issues? (e.g., historical elements, background noise, low lighting levels, emergency exit requirements, etc.). For more guidance on addressing heritage issues in relation to accessibility, see Architectural Conservation Note #9: Accessibility and Historic Buildings at: http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/culdiv/heritage/conote9.htm or the Australian document: Improving Access to Heritage Buildings at: http://www.ahc.gov.au/publications/generalpubs/access/

3. **Identify opportunities and design measures to improve accessibility – Consult with users**

4. **Prioritize and estimate cost of improvement measures – Consider budgeting issues and work at securing funding**

5. **Review the opportunities for implementation – Work at securing funding together.**

6. **Look for alternate ways to achieve main priorities.**

TIP: Think outside of the box - can changing the use of the entrances or the spaces within the building make a difference?

7. **Prepare an Implementation Plan – Consult with users and review budget/ funding sources that are required. If necessary, define the stages for carrying out the work.**

8. **Carry out the work and implement changes in the operation of building.**

Repeat these steps when each stage of improvement is completed (e.g., use as the framework for a continuous program of auditing and review).

Auditing Best Practices

City of Barrie – Audit Checklist

The City of Barrie AAC has developed a simplified access audit checklist that may be useful for other municipalities. For more information and to download the checklist (Adobe PDF format), visit the City of Barrie website (http://www.city.barrie.on.ca/docs/barrierfreesimplifiedchecklist.pdf).

City of Sault Ste Marie Accessibility Review Audit Tool

As identified in their Joint Accessibility Plan (2004), the City of Sault Ste Marie has developed a checklist for barrier identification. This checklist combines a review of physical and architectural barriers with a review of other informational, communications and equipment related barriers to access. For more information and to download the checklist (Adobe pdf format), visit the City of Sault Ste. Marie website (http://www.city.sault-ste-marie.on.ca/SSMAAC/index.htm).

Guelph Wellington Barrier Free Committee (GWBFC)

The GWBFC provides some guidelines on accessibility and a checklist to help determine how accessible businesses or establishment are. For more information and to download their accessibility checklist, visit the Guelph Wellington Barrier Free Committee website (http://www.gwbarrierfree.org/checklist.htm).

City of Guelph Facility Accessibility Audit (2002)

The City of Guelph undertook a series of accessibility audits of municipal buildings, with the assistance of their Barrier Free Committee. Their auditing report identifies one example of barrier prioritization that can be used and details their long-term plan to conduct accessibility upgrades based on audit findings. Your municipality may find this audit report useful for future planning efforts. This audit report is available online at the City of Guelph website (http://www.city.guelph.on.ca/document.cfm?documentid=3699&category=883).

Town of Georgina – An Accessibility Audit

The Town of Georgina conducted a series of site and building reviews to assess their compliance in accordance with the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Your municipality may find this audit report useful reference for future planning efforts. This audit report is available online (Adobe PDF format) at the Town of Georgina website (http://www.town.georgina.on.ca/PDF/acc/AAC-AuditFinalReport.pdf).

Best Practice: Task Force for Inclusive Recreation in Cambridge – Community Access Report

The Task Force for Inclusive Recreation in Cambridge – a collaboration of agencies serving people with disabilities has prepared an audit report identifying barriers at several public facilities including arenas, community centres, senior's centres, indoor pools and gymnasiums. The goal of the project, which was funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Community AccessAbility Program, was to centralize information for people with disabilities.

The Task force acknowledges that "access for people with disabilities can be a difficult concept to define. The difficulty occurs because there are so many different disabilities and each person has a different experience with their own disability. With a moment's reflection, one might begin to appreciate the different degrees of disability that exist."

The Community Access Report and additional information is provided on the Access Cambridge website (http://www.accesscambridge.org/community_access.html).

A Focus on Municipal Elections: Accessibility Checklist For Voting Facilities

Improving access is not as difficult as it might seem. In many cases small changes can make a world of difference. Below is a checklist for municipal staff and volunteers who want to ensure voting facilities are accessible to voters with disabilities. Please note that municipalities must meet – or exceed – the accessibility requirements of the Municipal Elections Act and the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code when addressing the accessibility of municipal voting facilities.

A. Getting There

- Is there designated or reserved parking for people with disabilities and seniors, located close to the voting facility? If there is no parking, can you provide temporary parking just for voting day (e.g., open up a school playground to provide accessible spaces or suspend the usual parking restrictions for people with disabilities)?
- If the parking is on the road, is there a curb cut close by to allow users of mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, canes, or crutches) access to the pavement and sidewalk?

- Are the voting facility and accessible parking spaces clearly sign-posted, with signage that is visible from the road?
- If there is more than one entrance, is it sign-posted from all the possible approaches, including marking any accessible routes with the International Symbol of Accessibility?
- Note: For signage, black, lower case lettering in a sans serif font (e.g., Arial) on a white background is easiest to read.
- Is the approach to the voting facility unobstructed and in good condition? Broken paving slabs, gravel, potholes, parked cars and other obstructions makes access considerably more difficult and sometimes impossible – therefore routine checks should be made throughout the day.

B. Getting In

- Steps, even a small single step, can make a voting facility inaccessible to many people with disabilities and seniors. If your voting facility has steps up to the entrance, is there a ramp in place so people using mobility aids or who have mobility impairments can get in?
- Is the ramp well designed (e.g., handrails on both sides), safe and does it have a suitable slope in accordance to the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code or the Canadian Standards Association Barrier-free Guidelines? If the ramp is temporary, it should be securely attached to the steps so it cannot slip or wobble.
- If the main entrance to your voting station is inaccessible, is there an alternative accessible entrance? Could this entrance be used as the main entrance instead, for everyone? Is any alternative entrance for people with disabilities clearly sign-posted, using the International Symbol of Accessibility?
- Is door hardware accessible (e.g., lever or pull handles)? Round door knobs are difficult to use by persons with limited finger, hand or wrist movement. Ensure your door hardware passes the “fist test” (e.g., where it can be operated by a person using a closed fist).

- Is the door into the voting station wide enough for a wheelchair user to pass through easily? If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that may be out of reach, have you propped them open in a safe manner? If you do prop them open, make sure you don't obstruct the entrance and adjacent floor space.

C. Inside the Voting Facility

- Is there level access from the entrance of the voting facility to the voting area? Internal steps are just as much of a problem as external ones and will need ramps to make them accessible.

- Are door mats level with the floor to prevent potential tripping hazards? If not, can you remove them?

- Is the flooring non-slip, even and level? Highly polished surfaces can be slippery for some users, while thick carpeting and loose rugs or mats can cause people to trip or get stuck. Glare from polished surfaces is also problematic for people with visual impairments.

- Is the voting facility well lit? Even on a sunny day, some people with low vision and other visual impairments may need the lights switched on to ensure they can vote independently.

- Are there seats available for people to rest if they need to?

- Are any corridors inside the voting facility spacious enough for a wheelchair user to pass through comfortably? Obstructions such as stacked furniture or piles of boxes can cause difficulties for visually impaired people as well as people with limited mobility.

- Is there enough space inside the voting facility for a wheelchair user to move about easily?

D. Voting

- Is there a voting booth that is low and wide enough so a wheelchair user can vote independently and in secret?

- Is there a low-level ballot box that a wheelchair user can reach unassisted?

- Is the ballot box opening easy to identify (e.g., with a stripe around the slot that contrasts well with the background colour) to help persons with visual impairments post their vote?

- Is there a large print notice of the ballot paper? Have you displayed it close to the voting booth and where it is easily visible for someone who needs to use it? It needs to be low down on the wall and not obscured by other notices or signs. Placing it in the voting booths may be a suitable option to consider.
- Do the ballot papers have large print text, with the use of appropriate symbols on them?
- Is there a tactile template to help visually impaired people vote independently? Do you know how to use it and can you explain it to someone?

E. General Access Issues

- Some people with disabilities may need assistance but everyone has his or her own preferences – make sure you ask before you assume someone wants help.
- Many people with disabilities expect to encounter problems when going to vote, based on past experiences. If you have thought about all the issues above, make sure you let people know about it. You can place this information on your municipality's website where other related information is provided and/or you can identify accessibility information on the voting card and/or design an information pamphlet/brochure. Make sure the Clerk's Office knows about these issues and is able to advise people appropriately.

Acknowledgement: This checklist was adapted from the "Polls Apart Access Checklist", with permission granted by The Pollen Shop (www.thepollenshop.co.uk).

Other useful resources include:

- Accessibility of the Electoral System http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&dir=bkg&document=ec90505&;amg=e&textonly=false
- ADA Checklist for Voting Places http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/votingck.htm

A Focus on Housing: Toronto Community Housing Corporation – "Apples, Oranges and Lemons"

Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), created in 2001, is the newly amalgamated owner of the city's core social housing stock. The 57,000 units of housing distributed in 2,800 buildings have a history going back over the last century – three-quarters of the portfolio is more than 30 years old.

The TCHC has implemented a unique methodology for auditing its existing portfolio of accessible housing units. Their "Five Step" process is an effective management tool that may be relevant to other social housing service providers. The following is a summary of TCHC's audit methodology for other municipalities to consider.

TCHC Audit Methodology

Viewed within the context of the building stock, accessibility and its influence on housing design is a recent innovation and it was necessary to provide management with effective tools to define and manage the units which carried the "accessible" designation.

STEP 1

A classification system, originally developed for common areas of buildings, was adapted for units. Accessibility audits can use a long list of items but these were simplified into essential features to differentiate three (3) levels of accessibility.

STEP 2

A measurement survey was undertaken for each type (design) of accessible unit in each building and a floor plan drawing created in AutoCAD. The information on the drawing, combined with the notes recorded, related specifically to the classification criteria and provided actual dimensions.

STEP 3

The plans were reviewed and classified as part of a portfolio audit and the classification entered into a database serving the whole portfolio.

STEP 4

The database was used to create a step-up costing model which provided an order of magnitude cost (ballpark figure) to upgrade each unit to its highest potential.

STEP 5

The drawings were linked to an intranet database providing a simple one page, floor-plan for all levels of staff. The drawing viewed and printed on a single sheet, letter size, for easy reference, printing and reproduction.

Notes:

- The need for three levels of accessibility is debatable but it is essential that a line is drawn between accessible or not accessible to manage a large building portfolio. The "lemons" have to be upgraded or discarded to give validity to any unit designated as accessible.
- The architectural drawings provide a major benefit – first as a consistent assessment tool, and secondly as a simple and accurate reference for non-technical staff and tenants who are left to compare the "apples and oranges."
- Accessible units have no value in inaccessible buildings and the assessment of each building is a fundamental factor in using the methodology.

Best Practice: MS Society of Canada – Halton Region Report on Accessible Housing

In 2002, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada-Halton Regional Chapter undertook a review of the problems related to accessible housing in the Halton Region. The project was initially undertaken to determine if people with mobility impairments were leaving the Region because they were unable to find appropriate housing to accommodate their disability. In the interim, the effects of having long-term care facilities open in the Region meant revising the initial focus to allow for a look at the impact these facilities were having on the client population. The second purpose of the project was to provide a "Tool for Universal Design," a user-friendly tool for people searching for appropriate housing to accommodate their mobility impairments. This report is available online at the MS Society website (Adobe Acrobat PDF format) (http://www.mssociety.ca/chapters/halton/pdf/SCPI-ReportOnAccessibleHousing.pdf).

Universal Design Tools

Facility Survey Using the Principles of Universal Design

The following survey is provided as a sample audit tool for use by AACs involved in conducting facility accessibility audits. This survey was developed based on the "Principles of Universal Design." Note: this survey must be cross-referenced with the Ontario Building Code to ensure compliance with barrier-free design requirements.

This survey is divided into the following sections:

1. Accessible Approach and Entrance

2. Access to Goods, Programs and Services

3. Usability of Restrooms

4. Additional Access

A series of questions are assigned to each section in order to determine the level of accessibility of a given facility, evaluated against the seven principles of universal design. Each question is answered with a "yes," "no" or "not applicable" response, with room provided for additional comments and suggestions as required. It is intended that this checklist be adapted to suit your municipality's needs.

Audit Survey

1. Accessible Approach and Entrance

Principle 1: Equitable Use

The design is useful by people with diverse abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is there an accessible route of travel from the street that is the same for everyone?				
Is the accessible route from parking the same for all users?				
Is the main entrance the same for all users?				
Is the design appealing to all users?				
Are accessible features integral to the overall design scheme?				
Other?				

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is there more than one option for entering the building?				
If there is a ramp, are there also well-designed stairs?				
Other?				

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use

The design is easy to understand, regardless of the users experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is the route to the building easy to find and use?				
Is the entrance easy to find?				
Can you see vertical transportation options from the entrance?				
Other?				

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is there exterior signage usable by all people?				
Is lighting available to maximize use?				
Is the building directory easy to find?				
Other?				

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is the path of travel free of danger from cars?				
Does the path avoid unexpected level changes?				
Is there a place of shelter at entrance for inclement weather?				
Other?				

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Are the routes to entrances efficient, minimizing wasted effort?				
Can all people easily use the exterior and interior doors?				
Other?				

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user's body size, posture or mobility.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Can exterior building products be used by people of all heights?				
Is there room to exit a vehicle, if carrying large packages, equipment (strollers, luggage carts, wheelchairs, walkers)?				
Other?				

2. Access to Goods, Services, Programs, Activities

Principle 1: Equitable Use

The interior design is usable by people of diverse abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is accessible route to lobby and throughout building, same for all?				
Can all public spaces be used by everyone?				
Seating?				
Entrance to each space?				
Use of tables, counters, controls?				
Is the design appealing to all users?				
Is the air quality satisfactory for most users?				
Are accessible features integral to overall design scheme?				
Other?				

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Does the interior route provide choice in methods of use? (if elevator or escalator, are there well designed stairs?)				
Are seating options varied (mix of heights, movable)?				
Can daily users adjust temperature controls in local zones?				
Other?				

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use

The design is easy to understand, regardless of the users experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
If more than one floor is there a consistent layout?				
Are building routes of travel easily found?				
Are elevators, other key areas visible or clearly marked?				
Can signage accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills?				
Other?				

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Does the building information system use symbols, print,and or tactile methods for redundant presentation of essential information?				
Do all the rooms have legible signage?				
Is the signage readable under a variety of conditions?				
Are building acoustics designed for effective communication?				
Is lighting designed to support functioning in each area?				
Are emergency alarms designed for use by people with vision and hearing limitations?				
Other?				

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Are hazardous elements eliminated, isolated or shielded?				
- Staircases (especially the undersides)?				
- Hanging signs or structural elements?				
- Access to dangerous areas?				
Is the path of travel free of tripping hazards?				
Are exit routes obvious?				
Other?				

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is the route efficient, minimizing wasted effort?				
Are there places to sit and rest along long corridors? Railings?				
Can doors and windows be opened easily?				
Other?				

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation,and use regardless of size, posture.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Can people using strollers, wheelchairs and walkers enter and exit easily?				
Within each area, is there a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user?				
Can all components be reached by people of different heights?				
Can all controls be reached, used by people with varied abilities?				
Is there adequate space to use equipment? (strollers, luggage carts, walkers)?				
Other?				

3. Usability of Rest Rooms

Principle 1: Equitable Use

The design is useful by people with diverse abilities

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is rest room with accessible features located as conveniently as other rest rooms?				
Is the accessible design appealing to all users?				
Are accessible features integral to the design?				
Is the air quality satisfactory for most users (well vented, no scented cleaning or air freshening products)?				
Other?				

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is there a family restroom that can be used by parents with children and others needing assistance?				
Other?				

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use

The design is easy to understand, regardless of the users experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is the route to the rest room easy to find and use?				
Is the entrance easy to find?				
Are the soap dispensers, faucets well placed, easy to use?				
Other?				

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is the rest room signage usable by people with low or no vision or limited literacy? (including pictograms)				
Is the lighting adequate to facilitate use?				
Other?				

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Have tripping hazards been eliminated?				
Are all fixtures free from objects that block and limit their use?				
Are heated pipes shielded to prevent burns?				
Can toilet stall doors be closed and locked with limited manual dexterity?				
Can people with children and using equipment easily get in and out of stall?				
Other?				

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
If multiple floors, is there an accessible restroom on each floor?				
Does the route to the restroom minimize wasted effort?				
Can the door be opened with ease, limited strength?				
Can all controls be operated with ease by people with strength limitations?				
Other?				

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless size, posture.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Can the features be used by people of different heights?				
Does the stall door provide room to enter, exit if using any equipment, packages, luggage?				
Is there room for a helper or parent in the toilet stall?				
Is the space free of obstacles that interfere with use (e.g., trash receptacles, supply storage)?				
Other?				

4. Additional Access

Principle 1: Equitable use

The design is useful by people with diverse abilities

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Are drinking fountains reachable by children, short, tall and seated users?				
Are telephones with text displays available with other phones?				
Is the design appealing to all users?				
Are accessible features integral to the design?				
Other?				

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design of the object accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Are public telephones usable by people at different heights?				
Does the pay phone allow multiple calling options? (credit card, calling card, coin, collect)				
Does the telephone design provide a place to write comfortably?				
Other?				

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use

The design is easy to understand, regardless of the users experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Are the locations of fountain and phone readily found?				
Do the designs of phone, fountain eliminate unnecessary complexities?				
Other?				

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Is any related signage provided in legible fonts and pictograms?				
Is lighting available to maximize use?				
Does acoustical environment allow for effective telephone use?				
Other?				

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Does the position of the phone and/or fountain avoid hazards?				
Are protruding objects in the approach shielded?				
Does the location of the phone assure some privacy?				
Other?				

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Does the design of the fountain or phone provide for ease of use by tall or short or seated persons?				
Is there a place to sit while using the phone?				
Other?				

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of size, posture.

	Yes	No	NA	Suggestions to Make Universally Usable
Does the placement of the fountain or the phone allow for use by a person using any equipment?				
Other?				

Acknowledgements: These survey questions were adapted from the Principles of Universal Design by the Global Universal Design Educator's Network (GUDEN) ©. This checklist (version 2003) was adapted for use in this Handbook with permission from the GUDEN, who have also commented that this checklist is a "work in progress" and they encourage feedback.

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